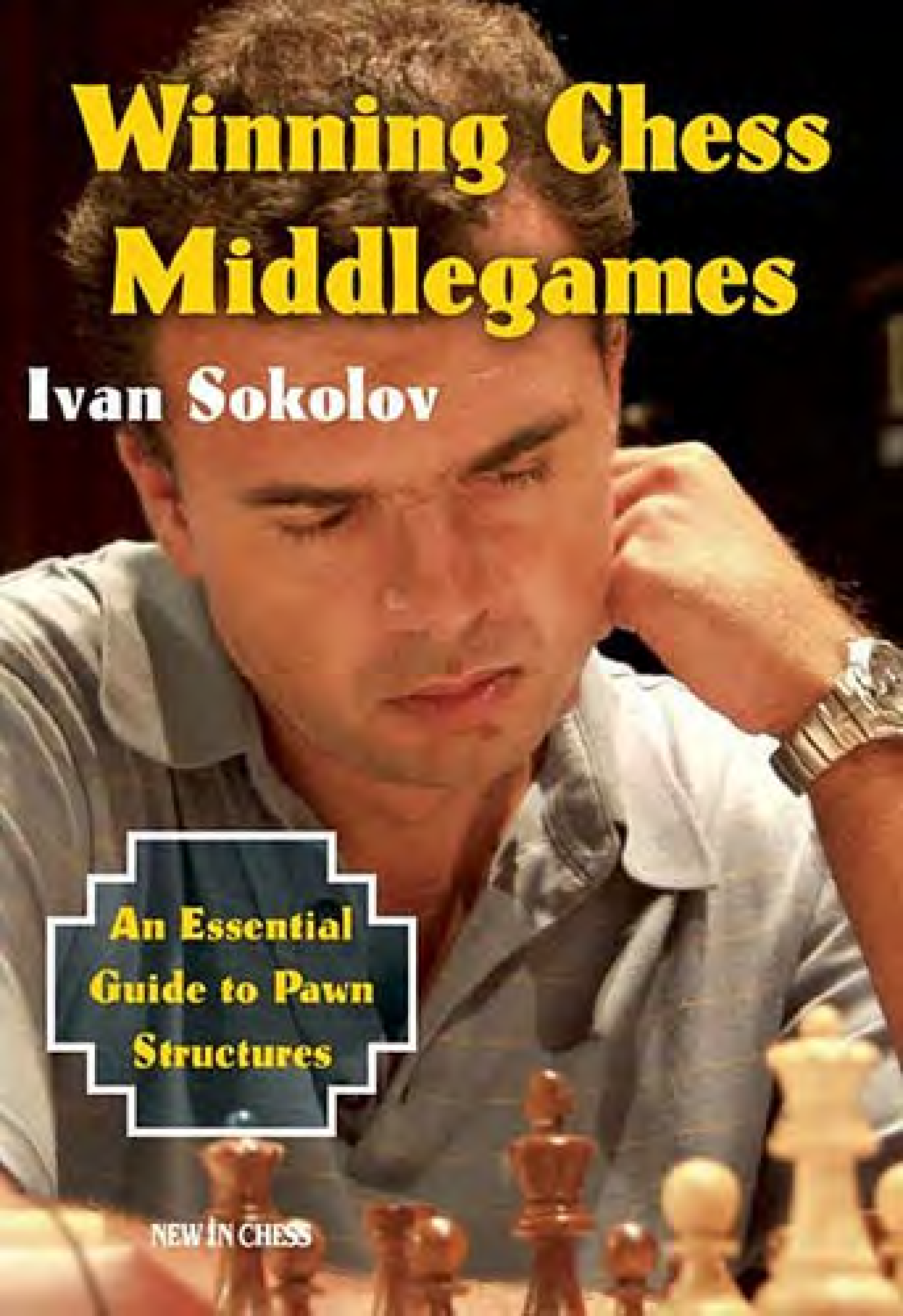
Winning Chess Middlegames

Ivan Sokolov



An Essential Guide to Pawn Structures

NEW IN CHESS

Ivan Sokolov

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New In Chess 2008

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Foreword

by Michael Adams

I think the first tournament that I played with Ivan Sokolov was the Oakham Young Masters (yes, we were young once) back in 1988. We then started to bump into each other at tournaments on a regular basis, became friendly and often socialised together following our games, sharing some glasses of wine. Our discussions were many and varied and some of them were even about chess.

I remember one particular conversation where I proposed a certain plan in a middlegame position; Ivan looked a little confused, his eyebrows started twitching, and he responded 'yes, but this is just a normal position'. In his chess education, he had broken down structures into various typical situations and analysed these. The English school of chess had a slightly more chaotic approach.

In this book, Ivan shares the fruits of his labours, which are invaluable tools for any player. This structured approach is quite instructive as often players choose their opening repertoire according to quite haphazard criteria, randomly picking up lines without giving serious consideration to how the resulting middlegames would suit them. To resolve this problem a bit of retro-analysis can prove helpful. By studying the resulting middlegames and determining your strengths and weaknesses, it is possible to go back to the earlier stages of the game and set out your stall accordingly.

The book also gives interesting pointers about the direction in which modern chess is heading. The role of the computer in opening preparation has become all-important and players' homework can progress right from the starting position until the end of the game. Reading the book, I was very happy that I was not caught in Ivan's preparation for his game against Krasenkow featured on page 265! I expect his opponent also thinks himself lucky that he diverged at an early stage.

Although the general advice will be especially helpful to club players, other topics covered will certainly be useful to players of a greater strength. Undoubtedly they will make note of the original opening suggestions, as I certainly have, but also enjoy the in-depth annotations to some excellent games. Club players shouldn't be dis-

heartened if the number of variations sometimes seems a bit daunting. As you can see from Ivan's own games featured here and elsewhere, aggressive, challenging play always makes it difficult under the rigours of a practical game to find the best defence. The level of defensive play that is possible at home in your study with some helpful suggestions from your silicon friend is rarely replicated in the heat of battle.

There are also a few of Ivan's losses in this book, I know from commiserating with him afterwards that some of them were quite painful, and he can't have enjoyed revisiting them for publication in this book. But an essential part of improvement, from which Ivan does not shirk here, is analysing what has gone wrong and being objective about not only the assessment of the position reached from an opening but your understanding of the resulting structures. After all, most main opening systems are completely viable but your mastery of them may not be.

Ivan's introduction struck a chord with me in this respect, as I suspect it does with most other players, as I personally sometimes persisted with unsuited opening systems too long. I would justify my choices to myself, on the grounds that objectively I had a good position, but the situations arising did not suit my style and I was then never able to get a good grasp of them.

Everyone must decide for themselves which systems best serve them but this book will certainly be a great asset in making these sometimes hard choices. Of course armed with the knowledge gained here you will be considerably better versed in all of them. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I did.

Michael Adams, October 2008

Introduction

I started working on this book in March, 2007. As usually happens, due to different reasons, it took me longer than my publisher and me had planned and I finished my work in August 2008. In this book I wanted to explore the – in my opinion – four most important types of pawn structure in chess.

Quite a number of books on pawn structures have been published, and one may rightly wonder what makes this book different.

Well, I have tried, as much as possible, to

1. systematize the thematic plans used and give clear explanations of them, and
2. incorporate the ideas of the featured opening variation into the pawn structure that ensues.

The latter is actually quite important. In the pre-computer era players normally polished their opening repertoire over the years, and even though opening preparation did not go nearly as far as today, years of theoretical and practical experience brushing up one's repertoire would normally result in a reasonably good strategic understanding of the positions arising from the openings played.

In the past 15 years, the involvement of computer programs and databases has made it considerably easier to prepare a particular variation for a particular opponent. However, thorough study and good strategic understanding of the positions still remains a must in order to capitalize successfully on your opening preparation. I still remember watching one of Anatoly Karpov's post-mortems, when he had won from some initially inferior Ruy Lopez with black. His opponent, slightly annoyed, remarked: 'Here, after the opening, you were definitely worse', to which the 12th World Champion calmly replied: 'Yes, but soon I was better'.

Indeed, Karpov has won from quite a number of inferior positions (his encounters with Garry Kasparov included), due to his superior strategic understanding of the openings he was playing. Kasparov has won many Najdorfs and King's Indians not only because he had the best novelties, but because he fundamentally understood those positions better than his opponents. On the other hand he was too stubborn to admit that the Berlin Variation of the Ruy Lopez was not 'his cup of tea', which ultimately cost him his World Championship title against Vladimir Kramnik in 2000.

Kramnik, on the other hand, being devastating in Catalan-type systems with white and Meran Slavs with black, at some stage started to opt for sharp Sicilians with white and King's Indians with black. That adventure did not last very long. Nowadays he is a merciless killing machine with his Catalans again, squeezing out the smallest of microscopic advantages, while the King's Indian with black is a long-forgotten voyage.

If such mistakes are committed by the world's very best, then what are we to expect from lesser gods? Throughout my own career, I have also scored reasonably well in the positions I understood and paid the price for being too stubborn to stay away from position types that did not suit me.

So the reasons why I have tried in this book to incorporate the strategic middlegame ideas and the games which I view as important into the four different types of pawn structure discussed in this book, were:

1. to provide a complete guide for the club player;
2. through a process of serious analysis of the material in this book, to also give the club player a reasonably accurate feeling as to which particular positions suit him and which do not; and
3. to give the club player who takes his time for a thorough study of this book, new strategic and also practical opening knowledge, after which he will definitely see a clear improvement in his results.

In the introductions to the four different chapters, I will further explain the distinguishing types of position, games and variations featured.

I hope that, apart from trying to improve his chess skills, the reader will also simply enjoy studying the games selected in this book.

Ivan Sokolov,
August 2008

Chapter 1

Doubled Pawns

Introduction

In this chapter, I will try to make structures with doubled pawns easier to understand and analyse, by systematizing them into 12 standard positions. The 12 'Structure' diagrams I have connected with the commented games that follow, reflect those standard positions, which are reached the most frequently.

As we shall see, a vast majority of structures with doubled pawns arise from the various lines with 4.e3 or with 4.a3 (the Sämisch Variation) of the Nimzo-Indian Defence. Apart from the fact that it is good to understand these positions in general, for those who play 1.d2-d4 with white, or the Nimzo-Indian with black, the commented games below will have the additional practical value that they will clearly improve your opening knowledge, an improvement that can be immediately implemented in tournament play.

1.1

Structure 1.1 (Game 1 – Sokolov-Johansen) shows a relatively rarely reached type of position. I have included this game primarily in order to improve the reader's general understanding. In practice it does not often happen in the Nimzo-Indian that White gets doubled pawns while Black keeps his bishop pair.

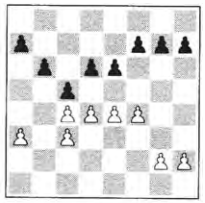
1.2

Structure 1.2 (Game 2 – Sokolov-Winants) and **Structure 1.3** (Game 3 – Gligoric-Nikolic) show what has been for many years the main line of the Nimzo-Indian. Anyone who attempts to fundamentally improve his chess skills needs to analyse these positions thoroughly. In the games related to Structures 1.2 and 1.3 I have tried to explain the pros and cons of these positions, which are difficult to play for both sides.

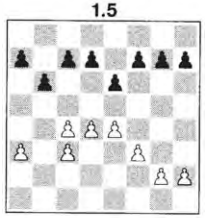
1.3

Structure 1.4 (Game 4 – Bronstein-Najdorf and Game 5 – Spassky-Hübner) and **Structure 1.5** (Game 6 – Kotov-Keres) deal with the positions arising from the Sämisch Variation. They are essential for an understanding of this variation, which was very popular 50 years ago, and played by the world's greatest players of that time.

1.4

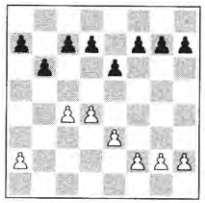


1.5



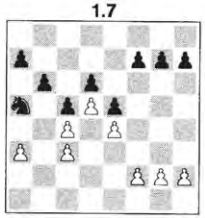
Structure 1.6 (Game 7 – Keres-Spassky) explains why for White it does not have to be bad to lose his c3 pawn in positions with a full centre and doubled pawns on c3 and c4. This idea is in use in a few Nimzo-Indian lines, and useful to remember and understand.

1.6



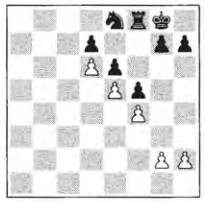
Structure 1.7 (Game 8 – Gligoric-Ivkov, Game 9 – Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky, and, with a mobile centre: Game 10 – Z.Polgar-Sokolov, Game 11 – Sokolov-Bologan, Game 12 – Sokolov-Dizdarevic and Game 13 – Radjabov-Anand) shows a plan that is often seen in a different type of position with doubled pawns in a full-centre Nimzo-Indian: Black targets (and often wins) White's weak c4 pawn, but by doing this, he gets his knight temporarily or permanently stranded on the edge of the board, i.e. on the a5-square. As you will see from the games analysed, most of the time White gets plenty of initiative on the kingside to compensate for the loss of his c4 pawn, but the game remains double-edged and White has to be energetic and accurate in developing and executing his kingside attack.

1.7



Structure 1.8 (Game 14 – Bronstein-Simagin) shows an original strategic idea by Bronstein, played almost 50 years ago and still very viable.

1.8

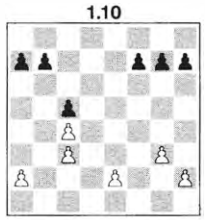


Structure 1.9 (Game 15 – Botvinnik-Chekhover and Game 16 – Kuzubov-Van der Wiel) shows an important strategic idea for White. He does not mind making the centre static, seemingly isolating his c4 pawn weakness even more, by exchanging his d4 pawn, in order to open the d-file and gain an important outpost on the central d5-square. An idea which was beautifully executed by former World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik 70 years ago (!) and still highly topical.

1.9

Structure 1.10 (Game 17 – Topalov-Aronian) deals with an idea similar to the one demonstrated in Structure 1.9, with the difference that Black's e-pawn and White's f-pawn have disappeared here and White has to rely more on his bishop pair.

1.10



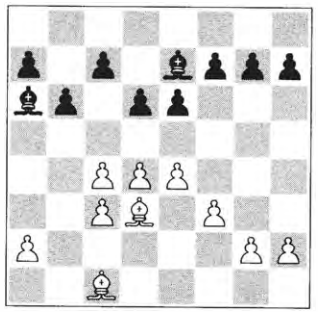
Structure 1.11 (Game 18 – Kaidanov-Onischuk) shows a beautiful positional exchange sacrifice idea in the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian.

1.11

Structure 1.12 (Game 19 – Kasparov-Ivanchuk) deals with positions arising from the English Opening where White has doubled c-pawns. Mostly White also takes central control, but his d-pawn has not yet been pushed to d4 (which brings some clear advantages here). Furthermore, White's f-pawn has been exchanged for and Black's e-pawn, so that the f-file is open for White's rook.

1.12

Structure 1.1



Black has two bishops instead of ♗ + ♘

In the vast majority of positions with a full centre and doubled pawns, the side with the doubled pawns (usually White) has a bishop pair versus bishop + knight. However, if instead of bishop + knight Black also had two bishops, would it benefit him or would it (in a closed position) make it more difficult for him to manoeuvre his pieces? An interesting question. In the following game (which went rather wrong for me) I got the opportunity to find out some pros and cons.

NI 13.6 (E44)

GAME 1

Ivan Sokolov
Darryl Johansen
Manila ol 1992 (2)

1.	**d2-d4**	♘**g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	♘**b1-c3**	♗**f8-b4**
4.	**e2-e3**	**b7-b6**
5.	♘**g1-e2**	♘**f6-e4!?**
6.	**f2-f3!?**	♘**e4xc3**
7.	**b2xc3**	♗**b4-e7**

8. e3-e4

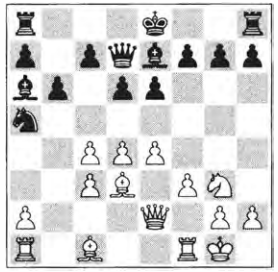
Deciding to advance the central pawn and then develop the knight further. In Shirov-Adams, Las Palmas 1994, White opted for a different set-up: 8.♘g3 ♘c6 9.♗d3 ♗a6 10.0-0 ♘a5 11.♕e2 c6 (in the event of 11...d6 I guess Shirov's idea was to push 12.f4) 12.f4 d5 13.cxd5 ♗xd3 14.♕xd3 exd5 15.f5 h5! with a complex game. Note that with his last move (typical for these positions) Black disturbed White's attacking plans.

8.	**...**	♘**b8-c6**
9.	♘**e2-g3**	♗**c8-a6**
10.	♗**f1-d3**	♘**c6-a5**
11.	♕**d1-e2**	**d7-d6**
12.	**0-0**	♕**d8-d7**

Black follows the regular Sämisch Nimzo plan, as if there was a knight on f6 and the e7 bishop did not exist. With a black bishop on e7 instead of a knight

on f6, White misses the important tempo move e4-e5 with which he often develops an initiative.

Black could also have decided to harass the g3 knight immediately by playing 12...h5? – however, with his king in the middle, this would give White the opportunity to take immediate action and sacrifice a piece with 13.f4! h4 14.♘h5! g6 15.♘g7+ ♔f8 16.♘xe6+ fxe6 17.f5 (White has opened up the black king's position and charges with a direct mating attack, while Black's bishop and knight are stranded on the a-file) 17...♔g7 (or 17...exf5 18.exf5 ♗f6 19.♗g5! ♔g7 (on 19...♗xg5, 20.fxg6+ ♗f6 21.♕e6 wins) 20.♗xf6+ ♕xf6 21.fxg6 and White wins) 18.fxg6 ♖f8 (18...♗f6 19.e5) 19.♗d2 and White wins in the attack (19...♗f6 20.e5).



13. ♖a1-b1?!

Typically in such positions, White has to use his extra space and his advantage in development to work out an initiative, before his structural deficiencies will start to be felt.

13.f4! was a good and energetic way to start: 13...♕a4 14.f5 ♗xc4 15.fxe6 fxe6 16.♘h5 ♖g8 17.♘f4 0-0-0 18.♘xe6! and White is better. In such positions, most of the time the critical moment arrives rather early in the game. White has to sense this and seize the initiative, and should not be afraid to sacrifice material and take risks. If White misses such opportunities and continues playing 'regular moves', like I did in this game, then he will often get outplayed positionally, lose the game without firing a shot and wonder throughout a sleepless night how he ended up with such a lousy position after making all those 'normal' moves.

In the game I definitely saw the possibilities associated with 13.f4!, but playing White against some under-2500 Australian guy, I thought 'regular' moves should suffice, and the win should arrive without any risks involved. This is perhaps a reasonable way of thinking when you play some Catalan line with white, but not in this type of Nimzo. White is about to learn this lesson soon.

13. ... h7-h5!

14. ♖f1-e1?!

One more 'regular', timid move and Black is already slightly better. It was high time – and White's last chance – to realize the need for energetic action and opt for 14.f4! and the consequential piece sacrifice. Not an easy decision, but nevertheless this was the principled way to proceed: 14...h4 15.♘h5 g6

16.♘g7+ ♔f8 17.♘xe6+ ♕xe6 18.d5 (18.f5 gxf5 19.♖xf5 is also possible) 18...♕d7 (or 18...♕f6 19.e5 ♕g7 20.♗e3 with compensation) 19.f5 gxf5 20.♖xf5 with a strong attack. Black's ♗a6 and ♘a5 are again stranded on the wrong side of the board.

14. ... h5-h4
15. ♘g3-f1 c7-c5

White has missed his opportunities to take the initiative and Black, due to his better pawn structure, now enjoys a slight but lasting advantage

16. ♗c1-e3 ♖a8-c8
17. ♘f1-d2 e6-e5
18. f3-f4

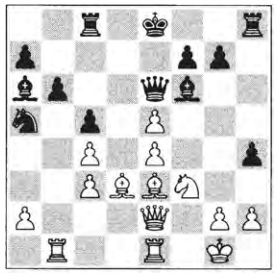
Trying to remain active and keep some central tension. In general this is a good strategy – however, the position does not offer the same opportunities as a few moves earlier. Black now has firm control of the central squares and White's action will soon result in more pawn weaknesses.

It was better to accept that things have not gone White's way and close the centre with 18.d5 ♕a4 19.f4 ♗f6 20.f5, and even though Black has achieved his strategic objectives, a draw is the most likely outcome.

18. ... ♗e7-f6!
19. d4xe5

Maintaining central tension was perhaps better, but Black would keep the upper hand after 19.♘f3 h3! – but not 19...cxd4? 20.cxd4 exd4 21.♗xd4 ♗xd4+ 22.♘xd4 and White gets what he wants. He will develop an initiative, since 22...♗xc4? 23.♗xc4 ♘xc4 loses to 24.♖ec1 ♘a5 25.♘f5 0-0 26.♕g4.

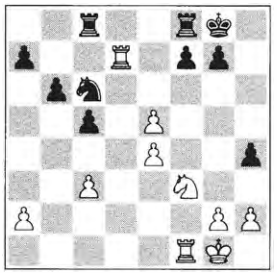
19. ... d6xe5
20. ♘d2-f3 ♕d7-e6
21. f4xe5



21. ... ♗f6-e7!

Looking at my horrible pawn structure and slowly becoming aware of the long and difficult defence that lay ahead, I could not help but wonder about the speed of my positional collapse: in a mere 20 moves, playing White against an opponent I had never heard of and not having made any clear mistake – except that my whole concept was a positional blunder.

22. ♖e1-f1 ♗a6xc4
23. ♗e3-g5 ♗c4xd3
24. ♕e2xd3 ♘a5-c6
25. ♗g5xe7 ♕e6xe7
26. ♖b1-d1 0-0
27. ♕d3-d7 ♕e7xd7
28. ♖d1xd7



28. ... h4-h3!

Inflicting the final damage to White, rendering his pawn weaknesses definitely irreparable.

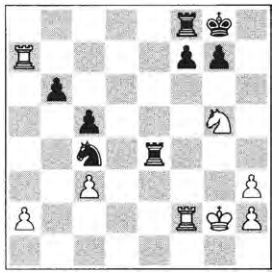
29. g2xh3 ♖c8-e8
30. ♔g1-g2 ♘c6xe5
31. ♖d7xa7?!

To suffer in the rook ending after 31.♘xe5 ♖xe5 32.♖xa7 ♖xe4 was a better choice, but choosing between two such evils is a difficult task. Also, with time-trouble approaching, I thought that with knights on the board my chances of a swindle should be reasonable.

31. ... ♘e5-c4!
32. ♖f1-f2

32.♖e1 does not help after 32...♖a8 33.♖xa8 ♖xa8 34.♖e2 ♖a3.

32. ... ♖e8xe4
33. ♘f3-g5



33...♖e5! 34.♘xf7

It seems as if White has created some counterplay, but the tactics are working for Black.

34. ... ♘c4-e3+!
35. ♔g2-g3

Or 35.♔g1 ♖d5.

35. ... ♖e5-f5!

Winning a piece.

36. ♖f2-e2

36.♖xf5 ♘xf5+ 37.♔g4 (37.♔f4 ♘h6) 37...♖xf7 38.♖xf7 ♘h6+.

36. ... ♘e3-f1+
37. ♔g3-g2 ♖f8xf7
38. ♖a7xf7 ♔g8xf7
39. ♔g2-g1 ♔f7-f6

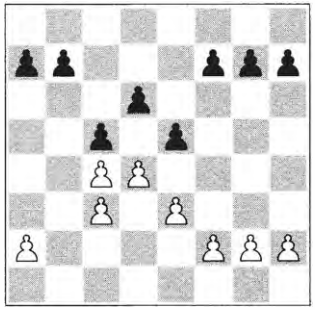
The black knight is temporarily corralled, but White soon runs out of moves.

40. ♔g1-g2 b6-b5
41. ♔g2-g1 c5-c4
42. ♔g1-g2 ♔f6-g5
43. ♔g2-g1 ♔g5-h4
44. ♔g1-g2 ♖f5-f4
45. a2-a3 g7-g6

And White resigned.

A painful defeat and a positional lesson that I have taken to heart.

Structure 1.2

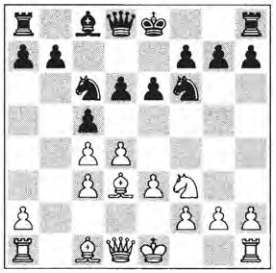


Nimzo-Hübner Variation – the mobile pawn centre

NI 14.8 (E41) **GAME 2**

Ivan Sokolov
Luc Winants
Netherlands tt 1994/95 (9)

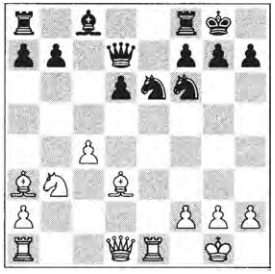
1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
4.	**e2-e3**	**c7-c5**
5.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**♗f1-d3**	**♗b4xc3+**
7.	**b2xc3**	**d7-d6**



The Hübner Variation, for many years considered one of the main variations of the Nimzo-Indian. Black's counterplay is not immediately obvious (contrary to the Sämisch Nimzo, here White's potentially weak c4 pawn cannot easily be attacked), so he has to play constructive moves, exerting central pressure and waiting for White to make a decision about his pawn centre. Once White pushes his pawns and the central structure becomes fixed, Black should be able to shuffle his pieces and find targets in the white camp. White should, for his part, remain as flexible as possible, keeping central tension and delaying any pawn push until the moment when a central blockade works in his favour.

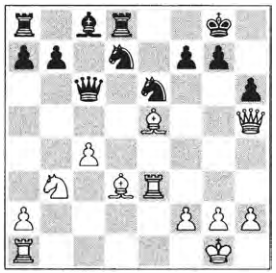
8.	**0-0**	**e6-e5**
9.	**♘f3-d2**	

White sacrifices his central pawn. It is, however, very risky for Black to accept it, since in this open position, White's lead in development and strong bishop pair are worth considerably more than the small material investment. The following game is a good example: 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 exd4 11.exd4 ♘xd4 12.♖e1+ ♘e6 13.♗a3 0-0 14.♘b3 ♕d7



analysis diagram

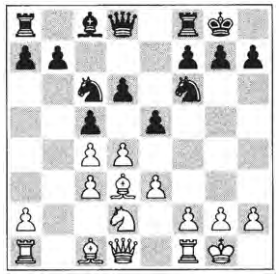
15.♖e3! (a good, multifunctional move. This rook is ready for the kingside attack, while White now also threatens to take the d6 pawn. The immediate 15.♗xd6? would have been wrong due to 15...♖d8 16.c5 ♘xc5) 15...♕c6 (if Black hangs on to his pawn with 15...♖d8, White gets a strong attack with 16.♗b2) 16.♗xd6 ♖d8 17.♗e5 ♘d7 18.♕h5! h6



analysis diagram

19.♗b2! (White trusts his calculations. Also good was 19.♗e4 ♕xc4 20.♗b2 and the black position should soon collapse) 19...♕xg2+ 20.♔xg2 ♘f4+ 21.♔g1 ♘xh5 22.♖d1! (this is the position White had to be sure about when he played 19.♗b2. Black cannot escape the deadly d-file pin and will lose material) 22...♖f8 23.♗a3 ♖d8 24.♗f5 ♘hf6 25.♗e7 ♖e8 26.♗xf6 ♘xf6 27.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 28.♖d8 and White won in Portisch-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1978.

9.	**...**	**0-0**



10.	**♖a1-b1**	

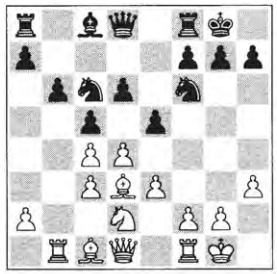
Taking an immediate decision in the centre with 10.d5 ♘e7 11.♕c2, with the idea of f4, looks attractive at first sight, but Black has a strong antidote in 11...g6! 12.f4 exf4 13.exf4 ♗f5 and it will take White a long time to activate his dark-squared bishop – if he ever succeeds.

10.	**...**	**b7-b6**

Black can also increase the central pressure with 10...♖e8 and force White to take an immediate decision. This looks like a good plan, but it costs two tempi, because most of the time the rook has to return to f8 later on.
The following game is a good example of the way the play may then develop: 10...♖e8 11.d5 ♘e7 12.e4 b6 13.♖b2. (in principle this is a good, multifunctional move, preparing a rook transfer to the kingside and allowing a bishop retreat to b1. It was, however, probably better to start with ♖e1, when White has the knight transfer ♘f1-e3-f5 at hand) 13...♘g6 14.♖e1 ♖f8 15.♘f1 ♗g4? (with the white rook on b2 ready for a kingside transfer, this 'weakness provocation' plays into White's hands; 15...h6 was a better move) 16.f3 ♗d7 17.g3 h6 18.♖f2 ♖b8 19.♘e3 a6 20.♘f5 ♗xf5 21.exf5 ♘e7 22.g4 and White firmly took the initiative on the kingside and went on to win in Bareev-Short, Geneva 1996.

11.	**h2-h3**	

I am trying to keep the pawn structure flexible (as explained above) and prepare the typical f2-f4 push which, if executed at the right moment, almost invariably works in White's favour.



11.	**...**	**♗c8-d7?**

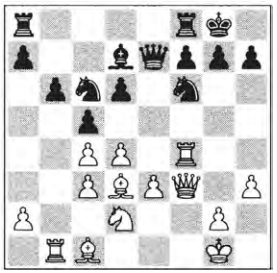
Allowing White to execute his idea. After 11...♖e8 12.d5 ♘e7 (the tactical solution with 12...e4? 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.dxc6 ♘xc3 would backfire terribly after 15.♕h5! g6 16.♕h6 ♘xb1 17.♗b2 f6 18.♗xg6 hxg6 19.♕xg6+ ♔f8 20.♗xf6) 13.e4 h6 14.♖e1 ♖f8 15.♘f1, the play would develop similarly to the previous comment with White having a small plus.

11...h6! was a good waiting move. Such useful moves, anticipating the opponent's actions, are of extreme importance in these positions. If White carries on with his plan, Black gets good counterplay after 12.f4 exd4 13.cxd4 d5, and if White decides not to push f4, it is not easy for him to find useful moves, while in the event of 13.d5 ♘e7 14.e4, Black is two tempi up compared to the previous comments.

12. f2-f4! e5xf4

The same counterplan 12...exd4 13.cxd4 d5 (13...cxd4 14.e4 leads to thematic positions where after ♖e1, ♘f3 and ♗b2, White regains the d4 pawn, retaining the better play; 13...♘b4 would allow the exchange sacrifice 14.♖xb4 cxb4 15.e4 and White develops a strong attack) does not work now because of 14.dxc5 bxc5 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17.♕h5+ ♔g8 18.♕xd5 and White is a sound pawn up.

13. ♖f1xf4 ♕d8-e7
14. ♕d1-f3



I had every reason to be happy with the outcome of the opening. White has a strong pawn centre, which has retained its mobility (important!), and the open f-file can be used to increase the pressure. Black has no counterplay.

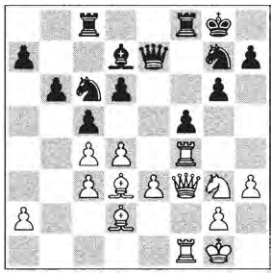
14. ... ♖a8-c8
15. ♘d2-f1 ♘f6-e8
16. ♘f1-g3 g7-g6
17. ♗c1-d2 ♘e8-g7
18. ♖b1-f1

I wanted to bring all my pieces into attacking positions on the kingside immediately, getting everything ready for the execution.

Also strong was 18.♖f6 ♘e8 (or 18...♗e6 19.♖f1 ♘e8 20.♘h5!; 20.♘e4? allows counterplay with 20...d5) 19.♘e4 ♘a5 20.♖f1 and White is poised for an annihilating attack.

18. ... f7-f5

The pressure along the f-file forces Black to weaken his kingside structure. Taking on d4 with 18...cxd4 first would not help after 19.exd4! (not 19.cxd4? f5 and now the d4 pawn hangs with tempo, so White is deprived of the e3-e4 break) 19...f5 20.♖e1 ♕f7 21.♘e4! fxe4 (21...♖ce8 22.♘xd6 ♖xe1+ 23.♗xe1 ♕e6 24.♕d5 wins; 21...♕e7 22.♘c5 ♕f7 23.♘xd7 ♕xd7 24.♕d5+ ♔h8 25.♖f2, doubling on the e-file, while the bishop pair would be very strong here) 22.♗xe4 ♕e7 23.♗d5+ ♘e6 24.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 25.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 26.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 27.♖xe6 and White is a clear pawn up.



19. e3-e4!

White is very much ready to open up the position. The execution will be swift.

19. ... ♘g7-e6

Or 19...♘e5 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♖xf5 gxf5 22.exf5 with a terrible attack.

20. e4xf5 ♘e6xf4
21. ♗d2xf4 c5xd4
22. ♕f3-d5+ ♔g8-g7

On 22...♕f7, 23.♗xd6 wins.

23. ♗f4xd6 ♕e7-e3+
24. ♔g1-h2 ♖f8-f6

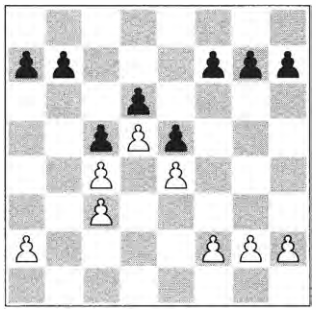
24...♖f7 would not save Black after 25.♗e4 ♖e8 26.♗f4 ♕xc3 27.fxg6.

25. ♗d6-f4 ♕e3-e8
26. f5xg6 h7xg6
27. ♗f4-h6+

Black resigned.

After my opponent allowed me to execute my strategic idea with f2-f4, it was rather easy, but note that after 11...h6! instead of 11...♗d7?, a complex strategic battle would have ensued.

Structure 1.3



Nimzo-Hübner Variation – fixed pawn centre

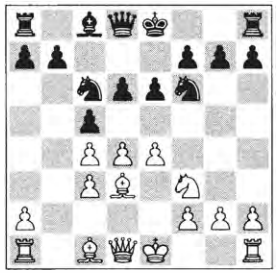
In Nimzo-Indian positions with doubled pawns and a full centre, it is extremely important for White not to push his central pawns too quickly, which would block the position and take out the dynamic element. This is the kind of mistake that is easy to make and a lot of a world-class players have suffered painful losses as a result.

In the 1980s, Yugoslav grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric, in general an expert in classical-type positions, lost a lot of games in the Hübner Variation with white, all of them following a very similar pattern. He would push his central pawns too quickly, gaining space but eliminating the dynamic element in the centre. As a result, Black got enough time to shuffle his pieces around and improve his position, gradually outplaying White. The fact that a player of Gligoric's stature committed this mistake so many times, underlines once more the difficulty of coping with the strategic complexity here. The following game is one of several good examples.

NI 14.3 (E41) **GAME 3**

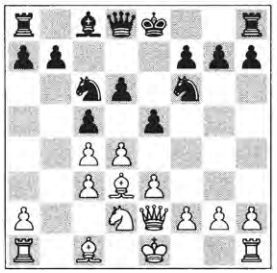
Svetozar Gligoric
Predrag Nikolic
Novi Sad 1982 (5)

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
4.	**e2-e3**	**c7-c5**
5.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗b4xc3+**
7.	**b2xc3**	**d7-d6**
8.	**e3-e4**	



Marking the beginning of a strategy I've never liked. Many strong players have opted for this way of immediately seizing space and it is difficult to be critical of this, but I feel that keeping the tension in the centre and delaying the push of the pawns is a much more appropriate strategy – see the previous game.

One interesting plan to occasionally try here is 8.♕e2 e5 9.♘d2.

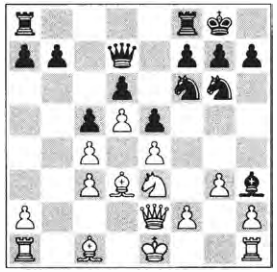


analysis diagram

A) At first sight it is not easy to understand the point behind White's idea after the simple 9...0-0. However, this logical move would justify White's idea: 10.d5 ♘e7 11.e4. The black king is already committed to the kingside and therefore it is considerably easier than usual for White to develop a kingside attack here.

A1) In the case of 11...♕a5? White, as will be discussed in Game 7, sacrifices his c3 pawn, developing a deadly attack after 12.♘b3! ♕xc3+ 13.♗d2 ♕b2 14.0-0 ♘g6 15.g3! ♕a3 16.f4 ♖e8 17.f5 ♘f8 18.g4 ♘6d7 19.g5 with a dream scenario for White and a nightmare for Black, Knaak-Spiridonov, Rubinstein Memorial, Polanica Zdroj 1979;

A2) 11...♘g6 12.g3 ♗h3 13.♘f1 ♕d7 14.♘e3.



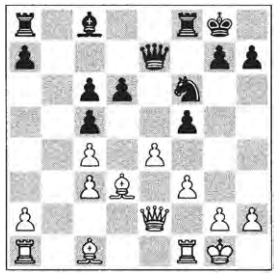
analysis diagram

White has a strong kingside attack, simply due to the fact that Black has castled too early. If Black had his king on e8 and the possibility to castle queenside here, the assessment of the position would have been entirely different.

14...♘e7 15.♖g1! h5 16.f3 ♘g6 17.♗c2! (good execution is always important. Faulty would have been the immediate 17.♘f5? due to 17...♗xf5 18.exf5 e4 (a standard motif here) 19.fxe4 ♘e5 and Black is better) 17...♕d8 18.♘f5 ♘h7 19.♗e3 ♕f6 20.♕d2 ♗xf5 21.exf5 ♘e7 22.g4 hxg4 23.fxg4 and White soon won in Timman-Knaak, Skopje Olympiad 1972.

B) Correct is 9...cxd4! 10.cxd4 0-0 and now the position is approximately equal after 11.d5 ♘b4 12.♗b1 ♘a6 with ...♘c5 to follow;

C) On the other hand, the attempt at counterplay with 9...♕e7? 10.d5 e4 is not advisable, since White is better after 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.0-0 f5 14.f3 ♘f6 15.e4 0-0



analysis diagram

16.exf5! (correctly steering into an endgame where Black's d6 and c5 pawns will be targeted by White's dark-squared bishop. Black would be doing fine in case of 16.♗g5 h6 17.♗h4 g5) 16...♕xe2 17.♗xe2 ♗xf5 18.♖d1 ♖fe8 19.♗f1 ♖ad8 20.♗f4 d5 (now Black's c5 and d5 pawns are rather weak) 21.♖d2 h6 22.♖ad1 ♖e7 23.♔f2 ♗e6 24.♗e3 ♖f7 25.♔g1 ♘d7 26.♖b2 and Black's position soon collapsed in Portisch-Csom, Hungarian Championship, Budapest 1971.

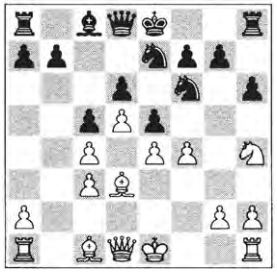
8.	**...**	**e6-e5**
9.	**d4-d5**	**♘c6-e7**

As early as move 9, a position has been reached with fixed strategic features, where in the long run the knights should be superior to the bishops. Even though White has more space, he runs the risk that his position soon becomes impossible to improve, while Black is just beginning to carry out his plans.

10. ♖a1-b1

White has tried many different plans here and we will show some of them:

A) A classic example is 10.♘h4 h6 11.f4

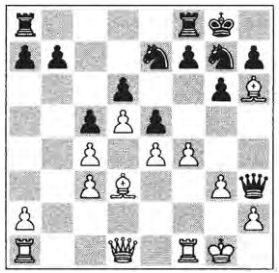


analysis diagram

11...♘g6! (this was a revolutionary novelty at the time) 12.♘xg6 fxg6 and Black had an excellent game in the 5th match game Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik 1972;

B) Another interesting option is 10.♘d2, but compared to the comments given after 8.♕e2 e5 9.♘d2 0-0

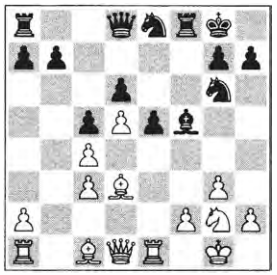
10.d5 ♘e7 11.e4, the situation is different. The position is sharp and complex: 10...♕a5 11.♕b3 (White wants to play 12.♕b5, exchanging queens, improving his pawn structure and forcing Black to castle; another option is 11.♕c2, when Black can decide to castle queenside and enter an unclear game after 11...h5 12.h4 ♗d7 13.g3 0-0-0, as in Gligoric-Larsen, Bugojno 1980) 11...0-0 12.0-0 ♘h5 13.g3 ♗h3 14.♖e1 ♕c7 (the immediate 14...f5 is favourable for White after 15.exf5 ♘xf5 16.♕c2 g6 17.♖b1) 15.♕d1 g6 (White is better in case of 15...♘f6 16.♘f1 h6 17.♘e3 ♕c8 18.f3 ♘h7 19.g4! h5 20.♔h1) 16.♘f1 ♕d7 (in case of 16...f5 Black will feel the effects of missing his dark-squared bishop after 17.♗h6 ♖f7 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♗e2 ♘f6 20.g4 ♗d7 21.♘g3) 17.♗h6 ♘g7 18.f4 ♗xf1? (the source of Black's troubles. Better was 18...♔h8! 19.fxe5 dxe5 followed by 20...♘g8, with an unclear game) 19.♖xf1 ♕h3



analysis diagram

20.♗g5! (this idea Black had probably missed) 20...f6 21.fxe5! fxg5 22.exd6 ♕d7 23.dxe7 ♕xe7 24.♕d2 ♕e5 25.♗c2, with d5-d6 to follow, and with a pawn up White was clearly better in Gligoric-Timman, Tilburg 1977;

C) 10.0-0 has also often been tried. Black is doing fine after 10...♘g6 11.♘e1 0-0 12.g3 ♗h3 13.♘g2 ♘e8, for example: 14.♖e1 f5 15.exf5 ♗xf5



analysis diagram

16.f4? (this 'active' move does not help White's cause. Better was 16.♗xf5 with an approximately equal game) 16...♗xd3 17.♕xd3 ♕d7 18.♖b1 ♘f6 19.♖b2 ♖ae8 20.♖f1 ♕h3 (Black has taken over and White is in trouble) 21.f5 ♘g4 22.♘e1 e4! 23.♕e2 ♘6e5 24.♕xe4 ♖f7 25.♕g2? ♕xg2+ 26.♔xg2 ♘xc4 and Black soon won in Gligoric-Timman, Bled/Portoroz 1979.

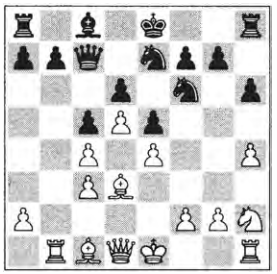
10. ... h7-h6

11. h2-h4

Trying to either gain space or force Black to push ...h6-h5 and allow the white bishop to g5.

11. ... ♕d8-c7

12. ♘f3-h2



Preparing 13.h5 (12.h5? ♗g4), forcing Black to make a decision.

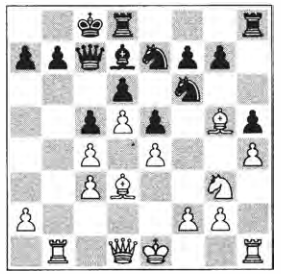
12. ... h6-h5!

Good decision. As we will see later, the activity connected with the white bishop on g5 will be of a temporary nature, and Black will soon be calling the shots on the kingside.

13. ♘h2-f1 ♗c8-d7

14. ♘f1-g3 0-0-0

15. ♗c1-g5



15. ... ♘e7-g8!

The start of a very instructive manoeuvring phase. Black is going to disentangle his pieces and launch a strong attack on the kingside, while the white pieces, who are piled up on the queenside, will be unable to create any serious threat.

16. 0-0 ♖d8-f8!

17. ♖f1-e1 ♔c8-b8

18. ♖e1-e2 ♗d7-g4!

19. f2-f3 ♗g4-c8

Now Black is ready to start kingside action.

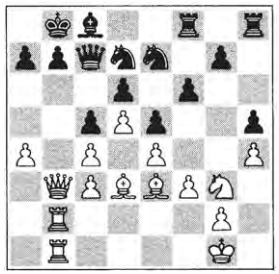
20. ♖e2-b2 ♘f6-d7

21. ♕d1-b3 f7-f6

22. ♗g5-e3 ♘g8-e7

23. a2-a4

If 23.♘f5, then 23...♖f7 with ...g7-g6 to follow, with plans similar to the game.



23. ... ♔b8-a8!

24. ♕b3-a3 ♘d7-b8

25. a4-a5 ♘b8-a6

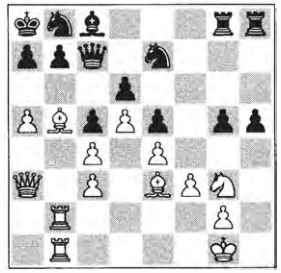
Black's play has been very instructive. All potential white activity has been eliminated, while the attack on the white monarch is about to start any time now, and will be impossible to stop. White is completely lost.

26. ♗d3-c2 ♖f8-g8

27. ♗c2-a4 g7-g5

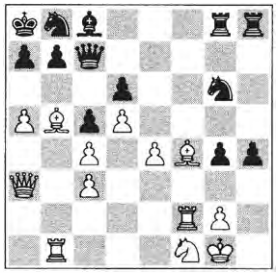
28. h4xg5 f6xg5

29. ♗a4-b5 ♘a6-b8



A sorry sight. On the queenside White is not able to create a single threat, while on the other side of the board the battle is lost. During – and after! – the game the white player must have thought: 'I had my two beautiful bishops, more space, even something which looked like an initiative, I did not blunder anything and still I lost a horrible game. How could it go so wrong?'

30. ♘g3-f1 g5-g4
31. f3-f4 e5xf4
32. ♗e3xf4 ♘e7-g6
33. ♖b2-f2 h5-h4

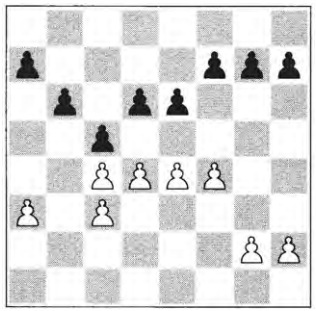


White could safely resign here. His last moves are agony.

34. e4-e5 g4-g3
35. ♖f2-f3 ♘g6xf4
36. ♖f3xf4 d6xe5
37. ♖f4-f6 h4-h3
38. a5-a6 h3xg2
39. a6xb7+ ♗c8xb7
40. ♖b1-a1 g2xf1♕+
41. ♖f6xf1 a7-a6
42. ♖f1-f6 ♖h8-h1+

White resigned.

Structure 1.4



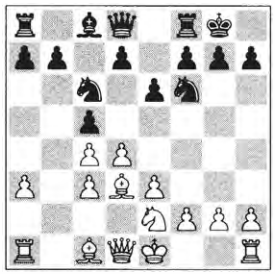
Nimzo-Sämisch structure – black pawn on c5

NI 18.13 (E29) **GAME 4**

David Bronstein
Miguel Najdorf

Budapest Candidates' Tournament 1950 (5)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. e2-e3 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗f1-d3 0-0
8. ♘g1-e2



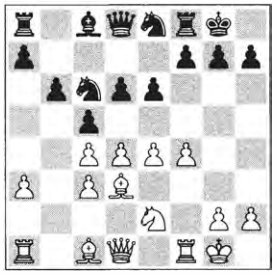
8. ... d7-d6?!

Later it was established that it's better for Black to immediately start active counterplay with 8...b6 and ...♗a6, ...♘a5 to follow. The relative tempo loss by 8...d6 combined with the plan that follows, will prove to be fatal. White is ready to advance towards the black king and immediate counterplay – mostly related to the capture of the c4 pawn – is needed to achieve a dynamic balance.

9. e3-e4 ♘f6-e8

More in the spirit of Black's previous move would have been 9...e5.

10. 0-0 b7-b6
11. f2-f4

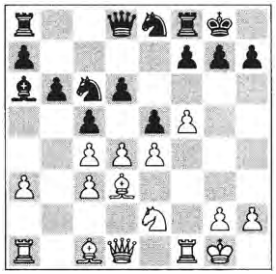


11. ... ♗c8-a6?

Crucial mistake. By now it is rather evident that Black's planned counterplay will not come in time. It is rather puzzling that a player of Najdorf's stature did not realize the danger he was facing and did not see the necessity to stop White's kingside advance with 11...f5!. After the text, the white attack develops quickly and devastatingly.

It is worth noting that the critical – and ultimate – mistake occurred as early as move 11 in this game. As I mentioned before, even though these positions seem to be rather closed, critical moments often occur very early on. It is necessary to sense them and realize that the consequence of a strategic error is, most of the time, irreparable.

12. f4-f5! e6-e5



13. f5-f6!

A thematic idea, worth remembering – and likely to have been missed by Najdorf.

13. ... ♔g8-h8

13...♘xf6 steps into a deadly pin after 14.♗g5 with ♘g3-♘h5 to follow.

14. d4-d5 ♘c6-a5
15. ♘e2-g3

White is undisturbedly launching a mating attack, while Black's ♗a6 and ♘a5 are stuck on the wrong side of the board (capturing the c4 pawn would be rather irrelevant here). A typical Nimzo gone terribly wrong for Black.

15. ... g7xf6

On 15...♗xc4, probably the easiest way to win is 16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.fxg7+ ♘xg7 18.♗h6 f6 19.♖a2! a6 20.♖af2 ♖a7 21.♘h5 ♘xh5 22.♕xh5 ♖ff7 23.♖xf6.

16. ♘g3-f5 ♗a6-c8
17. ♕d1-h5 ♗c8xf5
18. e4xf5 ♖f8-g8
19. ♖f1-f3 ♖g8-g7
20. ♗c1-h6 ♖g7-g8
21. ♖f3-h3 1-0

There is no defence against 22.♗f8.

NI 19.7 (E24) **GAME 5**

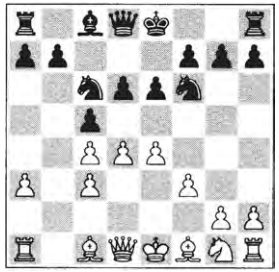
Boris Spassky
Robert Hübner
Turin 1982 (1)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. f2-f3 ♘b8-c6

Nowadays, 6...d5 is, for some reason, considered to be best here. The text, however, leads to a complicated strategic battle where Black has good chances to play for a win – contrary to 6...d5 lines, where every mediocre booked-up player can draw with white against a strong grandmaster. White's c4 weakness remains a target, while at the same time he does not have an obvious way to efficiently push his central pawns.

7. e2-e4 d7-d6!

A clever move. Black temporarily stops e4-e5 and also does not allow White to develop his knight to f2 via h3, since 8.♘h3 fails to 8...e5 9.d5 ♗xh3 10.dxc6 ♗c8, with a good game for Black.



8. ♘g1-e2?!

I do not like this move here. 8.♗e3, protecting the d4 pawn in order to first move a bishop to d3 and then develop the knight, looks more logical and was played between the same opponents in Bugojno 1982. That game continued 8...b6 9.♗d3 and now:

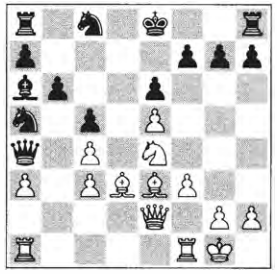
A) 9...♘a5 10.♘h3 ♗a6 11.♕e2 ♕d7

analysis diagram

12.e5! (White takes action because he was, I assume, worried about 12...♕a4) 12...dxe5 13.dxe5 ♘g8 14.0-0 ♘e7 (14...♕a4 15.♘g5 ♘e7 16.♘e4 or 15...♗xc4 16.♘e4 looks good for White). Thus far Spassky-Hübner. Now it seems to me that Black has problems after 15.♘g5! (instead of 15.♖ad1?!) 15...♕a4 16.♘e4 and now:

A1) 16...♘f5? is wrong due to 17.g4 ♘xe3 18.♘d6+ ♔e7 19.♕xe3;

A2) In the case of 16...♘c8? White has a tactical stroke:

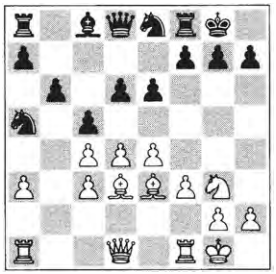


analysis diagram

17.♗h6! (as shown several times in this book, with the black pieces piled up along the a-file, White often has devastating tactics on the other side of the board) 17...gxh6 18.♗c2 ♕c6 (18...♕xc4 loses to 19.♕d2) 19.♘f6+ ♔e7 20.♖fd1 ♗xc4 21.♕f2 ♗d5 22.♕h4 with a crushing attack;

A3) 16...0-0 17.♗g5 ♘g6 18.♘d6.

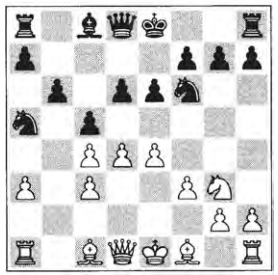
B) In the game Botvinnik-Furman, training match 1960, Black came up with an interesting plan: 9...0-0 10.♘e2 ♘e8 11.0-0 ♘a5!? (planning ...♗a6. Black wants to force the white knight to g3. Generally, White should be happy with this development, but Black has his reasons) 12.♘g3



analysis diagram

12...f5! 13.exf5 exf5 14.♘h5 ♘c7 15.♕e2 ♗a6 16.g4!? (with all Black's minor pieces on the queenside, White is anxious to begin kingside action) 16...♕e8! 17.♖ae1 ♕f7 18.d5 ♖ae8 and Black was better.

8. ... b7-b6
9. ♘e2-g3 ♘c6-a5



10. f3-f4

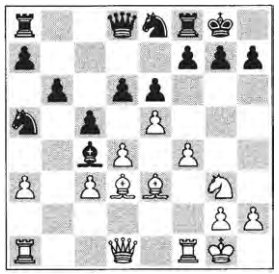
White does not have a convenient way to defend his c4 pawn, so he opts for a central pawn push, hoping to create threats.

White's activity is not going to produce any compensation for the pawn, so it is safe to say that as early as on move 10 White is already in serious trouble. So, white players beware! If you play these systems you take a positional risk often bigger than you've bargained for!

10. ... 0-0
11. e4-e5 ♘f6-e8
12. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-a6
13. ♗f1-d3 ♗a6xc4

Apart from the fact that he has lost a pawn for absolutely nothing, White also has a positional problem: Black controls a lot of light squares and the white bishop is not well placed on e3.

14. 0-0



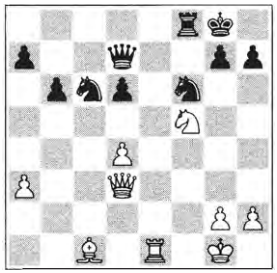
14. ... f7-f5!

A good move, preventing White from creating a mess.

15. e5xf6 ♘e8xf6
16. ♕d1-e2 ♗c4xd3
17. ♕e2xd3 ♕d8-d7
18. ♖a1-e1 ♖a8-e8
19. ♗e3-c1 ♘a5-c6
20. f4-f5

Trying to organize some sort of play.

20. ... e6xf5
21. ♘g3xf5 ♖e8xe1
22. ♖f1xe1 c5xd4
23. c3xd4



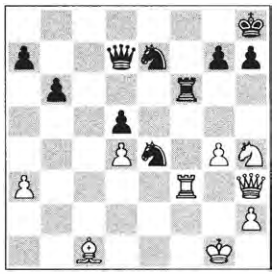
23. ... d6-d5!

The black knight will soon jump to e4 and that will be the end of White's 'initiative'.

24. ♕d3-h3 ♔g8-h8
25. ♖e1-f1 ♘f6-e4
26. ♖f1-f3 ♖f8-f6
27. g2-g4

Desperation.

27. ... ♘c6-e7
28. ♘f5-h4



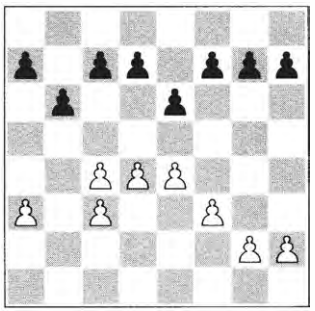
28. ... ♕d7-a4!

Looks like a good moment for White to resign.

29. ♖f3xf6 ♕a4xd4+
30. ♗c1-e3 ♕d4xf6
31. g4-g5 ♘e4xg5
32. ♕h3-d7 ♘g5-e4
33. ♔g1-g2 ♘e4-c5
34. ♕d7-c7 ♘c5-e6
35. ♕c7-b8+ ♘e7-g8
36. ♘h4-f3 ♕f6-g6+
37. ♔g2-h3 ♕g6-e4

And White resigned.

Structure 1.5

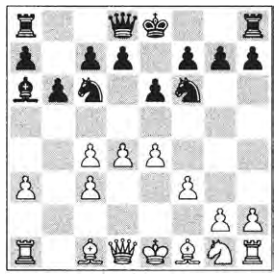


Nimzo-Sämisch structure – black pawn on c7

NI 18.1 (E24) **GAME 6**

Alexander Kotov
Paul Keres
Budapest Candidates' 1950 (14)

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. d2-d4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 ♘b8-c6
6. f2-f3 b7-b6
7. e2-e4 ♗c8-a6



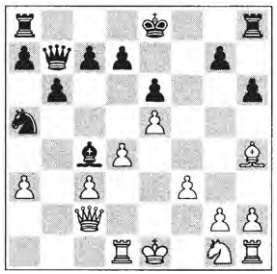
Both sides have clear objectives. White is gaining space, while Black is going to capture the white pawn on c4. Given the fact that no pawn weakness has been created in his kingside camp, he is not afraid of White's pawns advancing there.

8. e4-e5

White can also pin the f6 knight with 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 ♘a5 and now:

A) 10.e5 forces Black to advance his kingside pawns, which could in this case turn out to be rather favourable for the second player, since his king will be safe after castling queenside. A good example is 10...g5 11.♗f2 ♘h5! (11...♘h7 allows White to take the initiative with 12.f4!) 12.h4 f5! 13.♕a4 (Black is firmly in control after 13.c5 ♗xf1 14.♔xf1 ♔e7! 15.♘e2 ♕g8) 13...g4! 14.fxg4 fxg4 15.♕c2 ♕e7 16.♕e4 ♗b7 17.♕xg4 ♕f7 and Black quickly obtained a winning attack and won easily in Bannik-Petrosian, Soviet Union 1961;

B) 10.♕a4 ♕c8! Black steps away from the pin and is ready to remind White of his weak c4 pawn with the ♕b7-♕c6 transfer. The following short game demonstrates the complexity of the struggle ahead: 11.♗d3 (to me it seems better for White to advance his central pawns with 11.♖d1 ♕b7 12.e5 ♘h5 13.d5 or 11.♘h3 ♕b7 12.d5 c6 13.e5 ♘h7 14.d6) 11...♕b7 12.e5 ♘d5! (Black correctly takes advantage of the pin on the a6-f1 diagonal) 13.cxd5 ♗xd3 14.♖d1 ♗c4 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.♕c2



analysis diagram

16...0-0?

It is hard to believe, but this logical move turns out to be the crucial mistake. White now quickly executes a mating attack.

16...♔f7! (covering the g6-square!) 17.♘h3 g5! (not allowing ♘f4/♕g6) 18.♗g3 ♗b3 was the way to proceed. Black wins the exchange and, presumably, soon the game. The problem of his king will be easily solved with ...♖af8, ...♔e8-♔d8 and the black king runs to safety on the queenside.

17.♕g6+!. At first sight the white attack does not look that serious yet. Wrong! It is quite possible that Black's position can no longer be held. 17...♖f7 18.♗f6 ♕c6 (18...♘c6 does not save Black in view of 19.h4! ♘e7 20.♗xe7 ♖xe7 21.♘h3 with ♘g5 to follow, and the attack continues) 19.h4! ♗a6 20.♘h3! and the knight travels to g5, forcing immediate resignation. The way White executes this mating attack is thematic, instructive and definitely worth remembering – it could easily happen in one of your own games! 20...♕xc3+ 21.♔f2 ♘c4 22.♘g5 and Black resigned in Timman-Brinck Claussen, Wijk aan Zee II 1971.

8. ... ♘f6-g8

9. ♘g1-h3

The regular square for the knight in these positions. It can later jump to g5 (or via f2 to e4) or support the bishop on g5.

9. ... ♘c6-a5

Targeting the only weakness in the white camp.

10. ♕d1-a4

10.♗g5 was definitely a possibility, and then, after 10...♘e7 (taking the pawn with 10...f6 is very risky and probably not good: 11.♗h4 ♗xc4 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕e2 b5 14.f4 gives White plenty of compensation), 11.♕a4.

10. ... ♘g8-e7

Black's regular plan, to bring the queen to c6, does not work now, for example: 10...♕c8 11.♗d3 ♕b7 12.♗e4! c6 13.♖b1! ♘xc4 14.♗d3 ♘a5 15.c4. White has lost a rather irrelevant pawn and won a few tempi to develop his initiative.

11. ♗f1-d3

11. ... 0-0

To castle or not to castle? That is a difficult decision here. Castling prepares ...d6, with counterplay that is unpleasant for White, hitting the latter's vulnerable centre. On the other hand, White is ready to attack and the king on g8 could prove to be an easy target. I believe that with optimal play Black will be better, and White's centre will be targeted and, eventually, left in ruins.

However, the position is very complex and even a player of Keres's class soon goes astray and at the critical moment does not feel the danger, resulting in disaster.

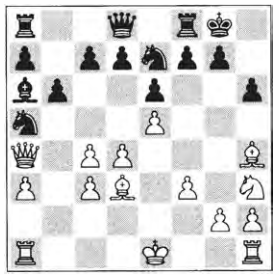
11...h6! was probably best. After 12.♘f4 0-0 13.h4 (or 13.♘h5 d6; 13.♗b1 also does not work in view of 13...♗xc4 14.♕c2 ♘f5) 13...d6! (a losing mistake is 13...d5? 14.♗b1! and White gets a devastating attack: 14...♗xc4 15.♕c2 ♘f5 16.g4 ♗b3 17.♕f2 ♘e7 18.♘h5 ♔h8 19.♗xh6! gxh6 20.♕e3 ♘g8 21.♘f6 Gutman-Levchenkov, Riga 1976) 14.♗b1 dxe5 15.♕c2 ♘f5 and Black should win. The white centre is ruined and his attacking potential is not sufficient, for instance: 16.g4 (or 16.dxe5 ♗xc4 17.g4 ♗b3) 16...exf4 17.gxf5 exf5 18.♕xf5 g6 19.♕xf4 ♘b3.

12. ♗c1-g5

12.♘g5 looks interesting, but White does not have enough after 12...h6 13.♘h7 (or 13.♗h7+ ♔h8 14.h4 ♗xc4 15.♗b1 d6! (always an important move) 16.♕c2 ♘f5 17.g4 ♘b3! 18.gxf5 (18.♗b2 g6 19.gxf5 ♘xa1 20.♗xa1 exf5 is better for Black) 18...♘xa1 19.♕e4 exf5 20.♕xf5 g6 and Black fends off the attack) 13...♖e8 14.♗xh6 gxh6 15.♘f6+ ♔g7.

12. ... h7-h6

13. ♗g5-h4



13. ... d7-d5?!

A strategic mistake, hitting the wrong pawn and leaving White's central pawn chain intact. 13...d6! was again the right way to attack the white centre: 14.♗b1 dxe5 15.dxe5 (15.♕c2 f5) 15...g5! 16.♕c2 (16.♘xg5 does not help: 16...♘f5! 17.♗xf5 exf5 18.♖d1 ♕e7 and Black wins) 16...♘f5 17.g4 ♘xc4! 18.gxf5 ♘xe5 and Black wins. Note that the variations are very sharp and there is a rather thin line between winning and losing.

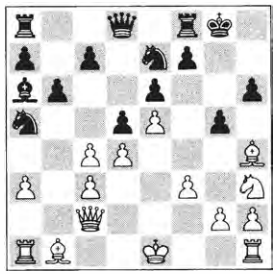
14. ♗d3-b1!

Keres had underestimated this move. Thanks to his unchallenged central pawn chain White has time to attack.

14. ... g7-g5

14...♗xc4 15.♕c2 g6 16.♗f6 looks terrible for Black.

15. ♕a4-c2



15. ... ♘e7-g6?

The critical and final mistake. Immediately 15...♘f5? would lose to 16.g4, but Black had an excellent, hard-to-find resource in 15...f5!! 16.exf6 ♘f5 17.g4 ♕xf6 18.gxf5 exf5 19.♘xg5 ♖ae8+! (not 19...hxg5? 20.♖g1) 20.♔f2 (20.♔d1 ♘xc4) 20...♗xc4 21.♖g1 ♔h8. The white pieces are coordinating poorly and Black seems to be better.

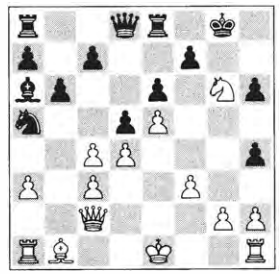
16. ♘h3-f4!

A star move!

16. ... g5xh4

16...♕e8 17.♘h5!.

17. ♘f4xg6 ♖f8-e8

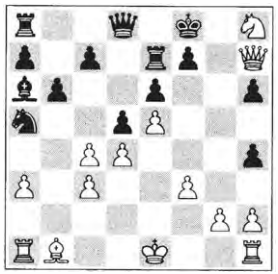


18. ♘g6-h8!

Once given the chance, White conducts the attack beautifully. On the other hand, as we see so many times in such positions when Black's strategy has failed,

the ♗a6 and ♘a5 are useless pieces, stuck on the wrong side of the board.

18. ... ♖e8-e7
19. ♕c2-h7+ ♔g8-f8



20. f3-f4!

Simple and strong. After 20.♗g6 fxg6 21.♘xg6+ ♔e8 22.♘xe7 ♕xe7 23.♕g8+ ♕f8 24.♕xe6+ ♕e7 25.♕g8+ ♕f8 26.♕xd5 ♖d8 Black could still fight.

20. ... ♘a5xc4

20...♗xc4 would prevent White from castling, but would not change the outcome after 21.f5 exf5 22.♗xf5, with 23.♕xh6+ to follow.

21. f4-f5 e6xf5
22. 0-0 ♗a6-c8
23. ♗b1xf5 ♗c8xf5
24. ♖f1xf5 ♔f8-e8
25. ♖f5xf7 ♔e8-d7
26. ♕h7-f5+ ♔d7-c6
27. ♕f5-f6+ ♔c6-d7
28. e5-e6+ ♔d7-c6

28...♔d6 loses the queen after 29.♖xe7 ♕xe7 30.♘f7+.

29. ♖f7xe7 ♕d8xh8
30. ♖e7xc7+!

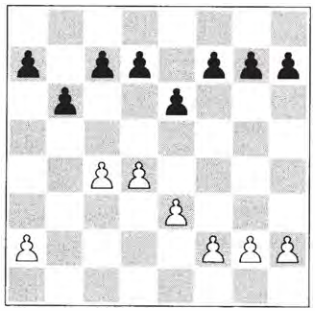
A nice execution till the very end.

30. ... ♔c6-b5

30...♔xc7 31.♕e7+ ♔c8 32.♖f1 wins.

31. ♕f6-e7 a7-a5
32. ♕e7-d7+ ♔b5-a6
33. ♖a1-b1 1-0

Structure 1.6



Classical Nimzo full centre-doubled pawns structure – White sacrifices his c3 pawn

A long time ago, in Oviedo 1992, I was playing Black in a typical Nimzo-Indian with doubled pawns and a closed centre against some 2450 player. At some stage there was a tactical swindle and I won his c3 pawn. To my surprise, my opponent obtained nice play, getting ample compensation for the pawn, and I was lucky to get away with a draw. The fact that his c3 pawn was not voluntarily sacrificed but obviously blun-

dered, played a role, so I found it difficult to understand that being a sound pawn up I had had to fight to hold a draw.

Later I analysed the game with Ljubojevic (for the younger generation: in the period of 1978-1988, Ljubomir Ljubojevic was one of the world's leading players), who opined that taking the c3 pawn was a serious strategic mistake, because according to him I had helped my opponent by giving him more space to move his pieces around and by opening the diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

'Anyway, you are not the first one to take pawns in such positions and later realize that White gets a strong, lasting initiative that's very difficult to cope with. Even a player of Spassky's stature once suffered a terrible defeat against Keres in their match, misjudging those risks. The pawn on c4 is always worth taking, because you threaten to exchange the light-squared bishops and at the same time the a1-h8 diagonal remains closed for the dark-squared one. Taking the pawn on c3 only opens the diagonal and helps White', Ljubo was quick to explain.

In 1992 I did not have a computer, so the above-mentioned game was not easy to find. This explanation, however, seemed logical and I remembered it. Around the end of 1993 I bought my first laptop and after installing the database, one day Ljubo's comments resurfaced in my memory. So, I found the game he had mentioned. Well, he was very right. Take a look for yourself.

NI 12.10 (E43) **GAME 7**

Paul Keres
Boris Spassky
Riga Candidates' match 1965 (8)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. e2-e3 b7-b6
5. ♗f1-d3 ♗c8-b7
6. ♘g1-f3 ♘f6-e4

7. 0-0!

Nowadays this is a well-known concept, and according to the theory it is the best move in this position. In 1965: good judgment by Keres.

7. ... ♗b4xc3
8. b2xc3 ♘e4xc3?

Spassky believes that, due to the tactical resource we will see, this capture leads to a forced draw. It was much better to forget about that pawn and castle.

9. ♕d1-c2 ♗b7xf3
10. g2xf3 ♕d8-g5+
11. ♔g1-h1 ♕g5-h5

The only move and the resource Black has been counting on.

12. ♖f1-g1

Naturally White is in no mood to allow perpetual check after 12.♕xc3 ♕xf3+.

12. ... ♕h5xf3+
13. ♖g1-g2 f7-f5

Fortunately for Black, his c3 knight is not immediately threatened, so he has time to defend it. This probably convinced Spassky that White had no more than a draw.

The text is the best defence. Black loses his knight after 13...h5? 14.♗b2 h4 15.♔g1, while 13...d5 does not help either: 14.cxd5! exd5 (14...♘xd5? 15.♗e2 ♕f6 16.e4 with a crushing attack) 15.♗a3 ♘e4 16.♗xe4 ♕xe4 17.♕xc7 ♘d7 18.♔g1 g6 19.♖c1 ♖d8 20.♕xa7 and White has regained his sacrificed material, while the black king remains stuck in the centre.

14. ♗c1-a3!

Rejecting the draw that would result from 14.♕xc3 ♕d1+ 15.♖g1 ♕f3+. Keres correctly judges that with all his pieces active and diagonals and files open, his initiative is worth more than two pawns.

14. ... ♘c3-e4

15. ♖a1-f1!

Preparing to drive the queen away with 16.♗e2 and to start pushing the pawns (f3, d5, e4), gaining space.

15.♔g1? would not be effective, because after 15...♔f7 16.♗e2 ♕h3 17.f3 ♘f6 18.d5 ♘a6, the king on g1 would be taking the square away from the a1 rook, so most of the tactical possibilities would not be working.

15. ... ♖h8-g8

Black has a number of possibilities, but no good defence, in this difficult position:

A) 15...♘c6, to try to castle queenside and connect the rooks, would not work: 16.d5! (White has to be quick) and now:

A1) Putting the knight on the edge of the board almost never helps: 16...♘a5 17.♗e2 ♕h3 18.dxe6 dxe6 19.♖d1 and the black king remains in the middle, since 19...♖d8 would lose to 20.f3 and after the e4 knight has been chased away, White would take on g7;

A2) 16...♘e5 17.♗e2 ♕h3 18.dxe6! (precise play is needed. Wrong would be 18.f3? ♘f6 19.dxe6 dxe6 20.♕a4+ ♔f7 and White does not have enough compensation) 18...dxe6 19.♕a4+ ♔f7 (after 19...♘d7 White would win a piece with the not so difficult, but still elegant 20.♖d1 0-0-0 (20...♘f6 runs into a nice mate: 21.♕c6! 0-0-0 22.♖xd7! ♘xd7 23.♗d6) 21.♖xd7! ♖xd7 22.♕c6 ♔b8 23.♕xd7) 20.♕b5! ♘c5 (other moves lose immediately: 20...c5 21.♗b2, or 20...♘g4 21.♕d7+ ♔g6 22.♕xe6+ ♘f6 23.e4) 21.♗xc5 bxc5 22.♕xc5 ♘g6 23.♕xc7+ ♔f6 24.♖d1 and White has regained his sacrificed material, the exposed black king remains a target and White's passed c-pawn will be quick. White has a winning advantage.

B) 15...♔f7 is an attempt to gain a tempo compared to the game. However, with correct play by White, it does not help either: 16.♗e2! (again precise play is required. In the event of 16.d5?! Black would defend with 16...♘a6! 17.♗xe4 ♕xe4 18.♕c3 g6 19.♗b2 ♖hg8! 20.♕f6+ (or 20.f3 ♕h4) 20...♔e8 and the white attack runs out of steam) 16...♕h3 17.f3 ♘f6 18.d5 ♘a6 19.dxe6+ dxe6 20.c5! and now:

B1) 20...♘b8 21.cxb6 axb6 (21...cxb6 22.♕c7+ ♘bd7 23.♖d1 ♖hd8 24.♗b2) 22.♕xc7+ ♘bd7 23.♖d1 ♖hd8 24.♗b2 g6 25.♗xf6 ♔xf6 26.♖xd7;

B2) 20...♘xc5 21.♗xc5 bxc5 22.♕xc5 ♘e8 (22...♖ad8 23.♖xg7+! – this tactic, and with it the entire line, works because on the 15th move White has chosen to leave square g1 vacant for the other rook – 23...♔xg7 24.♕e7+ ♔g6 25.♖g1+ ♘g4 26.♕xe6+ ♔g7 27.♕e7+ ♔h6 28.fxg4) 23.♖d1! ♖f8 24.♗c4 and Black cannot defend against the numerous threats: ♖d7+ or ♗xe6; or 24...♕h6 25.♕xf5+, winning.

16. ♗d3-e2 ♕f3-h3

17. f2-f3 ♘e4-f6

18. d4-d5!

With his king stuck firmly in the centre, and the ♖a8 and ♘b8 out of play, Black is helpless against the advance of the white pawns. White plays energetically and accurately until the very end.

18. ... ♔e8-f7

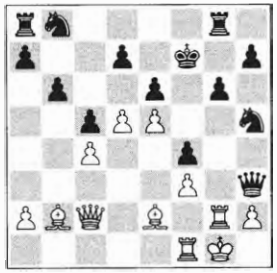
19. e3-e4! c7-c5

Trying to close one of the diagonals. White's pawn advance, however, continues undisturbed. Black is completely lost.

20. ♗a3-b2 f5-f4

21. e4-e5 ♘f6-h5

22. ♔h1-g1 g7-g6



23. ♖g2-g4!

Trapping the queen.

23. ... ♖g8-d8

Other moves also lose: 23...♘a6 24.♕a4; or 23...♘g7 24.♖xf4+ ♘f5 25.♕e4.

24. ♗e2-d3!

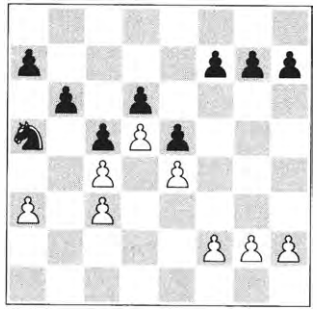
Precision till the end. The immediate 24.♖f2 would allow 24...♘g7, when Black would at least save his queen. Now the threat of 25.♗xg6+ forces the rook back and does not allow the knight to return to g7.

24. ... ♖d8-g8

25. ♖f1-f2

Powerless against 26.♗f1, Black resigned. A terrible defeat for Spassky in his prime.

Structure 1.7



Classical Nimzo-Indian doubled pawns with fixed pawn centre – Black has a stranded knight on a5

Black always has to be careful not to get stuck with his knight on a5 and his bishop on a6, attacking the c4 pawn which cannot be taken, while White is taking action in the centre or on the kingside, using his attacking potential, resulting from the absence of two pieces that are being inactive on the edge of the board.

When Black puts his knight on a5 and his bishop on a6, he'd better make sure that he either takes the pawn on c4, or seriously disturbs White's piece coordination, otherwise the absence of those two pieces could be felt dearly on the other side of the board! Exchanging pieces on the kingside often does not help, because the absence of the pieces stuck on the a-file will be felt even more. The following two games are good examples.

NI 19.4 (E26) **GAME 8**

Svetozar Gligoric
Borislav Ivkov
Bled 1961 (10)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. e2-e3 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗f1-d3 b7-b6

It is better to castle first.

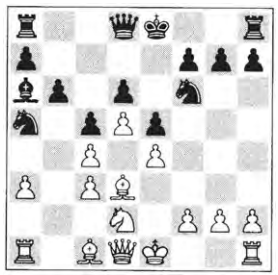
8. ♘g1-f3

8.e4! is a good way to take advantage of Black's inaccurate move order.

8. ... d7-d6
9. e3-e4 e6-e5
10. d4-d5 ♘c6-a5

The pawn on c4 is not likely to fall, while the knight will be stuck on a5 for a long time, so 10...♘e7 was a better and more logical move.

11. ♘f3-d2 ♗c8-a6



12. ♘d2-f1!

Exploiting the fact that the pawn on c4 is indirectly protected (due to the check on a4) in order to transfer the knight to e3, which is almost always an excellent square for it in these positions. From here the knight protects the pawn on c4 while at the same time targeting the f5-square.

12. ... ♕d8-d7
13. ♘f1-e3

13. ... h7-h5!

Planning ...♘g4 in order to exchange the e3 knight and step up the pressure on c4.

14. h2-h3

In case of 14.f3, Black continues 14...h4! with ♘h5 to follow, as in the game.

14. ... h5-h4!

Fixing the white kingside and preparing ...♘h5-♘f4.

15. 0-0 ♘f6-h5
16. ♗d3-e2

16.♘f5 is another option, trying to collect the h4 pawn. However, Black has a good game after 16...g6 (16...♗xc4 17.♘xd6+! ♕xd6 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 19.♕a4+ ♔e7 20.♕xc4 f6 21.a4 a5 22.♖b1 is better for White) 17.♘xh4 ♗xc4 18.♗xc4 ♘xc4 19.a4 ♕e7 20.♘f3 ♘f4.

16. ... g7-g6?!

This natural move allows Gligoric to develop a direct attack on his opponent's majesty with a lot of precision and power.

Immediately 16...♘f4! was necessary. With it, Black would achieve his strategic goals, since the knight cannot be kicked off of f4, for instance: 17.♗g4 ♕d8 18.♔h2 (preparing g2-g3) 18...♗c8!.

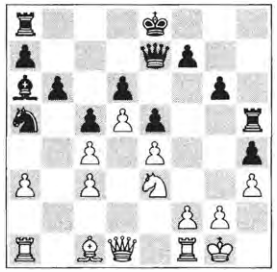
17. ♗e2-g4!

White begins a series of energetic moves, crushing Black's position in the end.

17. ... ♕d7-e7

17...♕d8?! walks away from the tempo-winning ♘f5, but now the queen is removed from the e-file and this allows White to take the initiative with 18.♗xh5 ♖xh5 19.f4! exf4 20.♖xf4 ♕e7 (or 20...♔f8 21.♖a2!) 21.♖a2! and White doubles his rooks on the f-file, causing Black a lot of trouble.

18. ♗g4xh5 ♖h8xh5

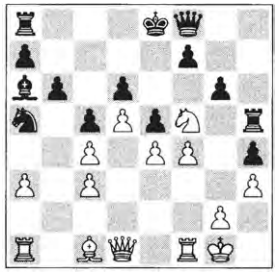


19. ♘e3-f5!

Highlighting the drawback of putting the queen on e7.

19. ... ♕e7-f8
20. f2-f4!

Black does not get a break.



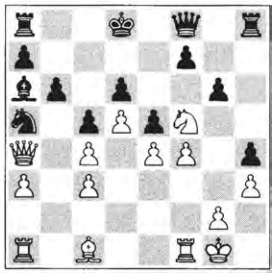
20. ... ♖h5-h8?

20...♖h7, to protect the 7th rank, may look more logical, but it has its drawbacks as well. On h7 the rook would be badly placed after 21.♕a4+ ♔d8 22.♘e3! (it is also possible to sacrifice a piece with 22.fxe5 gxf5 23.♗g5+ ♔c8 24.♖xf5 ♗xc4 25.e6 f6! – the only move, otherwise 26.♕d7+ – 26.♗xf6 and White definitely has compensation, but things are far from clear) 22...♕e8 (22...exf4 does not help on account of 23.♘g4 and the white attack continues) 23.♕xe8+ ♔xe8 24.♘g4! (the drawback of 20...♖h7) 24...♖h8 25.fxe5 dxe5 and White has a pleasant choice between taking the exchange with 26.♗h6 ♘xc4 27.♗g7 or winning a clear pawn after 26.♘xe5 ♘xc4 27.♘xf7 ♖f8 28.♘g5 ♖xf1+ 29.♔xf1. Black needed strong nerves and good calculation to find the best move: 20...♗xc4!!, holding the game after 21.fxe5 dxe5! (not 21...♗xf1? 22.♘xd6+ ♔d7 and now, not so clear is 23.♕xf1 ♖xe5 24.♘xf7 ♖xe4; but after 23.♗f4! ♗a6 24.♘xf7!, or also the immediate 23.♘xf7, White has a winning attack) 22.♕a4+ ♔d8 23.♗h6! ♖xh6! 24.♘xh6 ♗xf1 25.♖xf1 ♕xh6 26.♖xf7 ♕e3+ and Black saves his skin with perpetual check.

21. ♕d1-a4+!

Excellent play. The other way to sacrifice the piece was tempting, but far from clear: 21.fxe5 gxf5 22.♗g5 (or 22.♕a4+ ♔d8 23.♗g5+ ♔c8 24.♖xf5 dxe5 25.♗f6 ♖g8 26.♖xe5 ♕d6 27.♖e7 ♗xc4) 22...♗c8! 23.exf5 dxe5 24.♗f6 ♕h6!.

21. ... ♔e8-d8



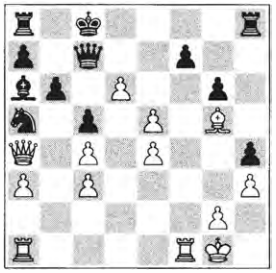
22. ♘f5xd6!! ♕f8xd6
23. f4xe5 ♕d6-c7

The barricades are stormed. 23...♕xe5 loses to 24.♖xf7 ♕e8 (or 24...♗c8 25.♗f4) 25.♗g5+ ♔c8 26.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 27.d6!.

24. ♗c1-g5+?!

24.♗f4! would have finished the game in style: 24...♕b7 25.e6! fxe6 26.♗e5 ♕d7 (or 26...♖e8 27.♖ad1 with 28.dxe6 to follow) 27.♕d1! ♖e8 28.♖f7! and White wins.

24. ... ♔d8-c8
25. d5-d6



25. ... ♕c7-c6?

Black misses his chance to stay in the game with 25...♕b7!, since after the seemingly crushing 26.♖ad1 (or 26.e6 fxe6 27.♖ad1 ♕c6!), Black has the cool 26...♗xc4! 27.d7+ ♔c7 28.e6 ♗xe6! and it seems that White has no more than a draw by perpetual check with 29.♗f4+ ♔d8 30.♗g5+ ♔c7.

26. ♕a4xc6+ ♘a5xc6
27. ♖f1xf7 ♘c6xe5
28. ♖f7-c7+ ♔c8-b8
29. ♗g5-f6 ♖h8-e8
30. ♖c7-e7!

The smoke has cleared. White gets his piece back, and reaches an easily winning endgame.

30. ... ♖e8xe7
31. d6xe7 ♔b8-b7
32. ♗f6xe5 ♗a6xc4
33. ♖a1-d1 ♖a8-e8
34. ♗e5-f6 ♗c4-b5
35. ♖d1-d8 ♔b7-a6
36. ♗f6xh4 ♔a6-a5
37. ♗h4-f6 ♔a5-a4
38. h3-h4 c5-c4
39. g2-g4 ♔a4xa3
40. h4-h5 g6xh5
41. g4xh5 1-0

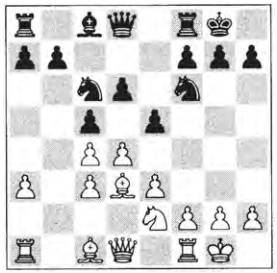
NI 19.4 (E26) **GAME 9**

Alexey Vyzhmanavin
Alexander Beliavsky
Lvov ch-URS 1984 (7)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. e2-e3 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗f1-d3 e6-e5

The main move, 7...0-0, is better here.

8. ♘g1-e2 d7-d6
9. 0-0 0-0



10. e3-e4!

A well-known plan. White keeps his central pawn structure flexible and is ready to temporarily sacrifice a pawn.

10. ... b7-b6

Taking the pawn with 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 exd4 is a strategically risky decision. The a1-h8 diagonal is opened for White's dark-squared bishop, Black's d6 pawn is weak, White has good control in the centre and after some time he will regain the d4 pawn, obtaining the better play.

A good illustration of how the play may continue is the blitz game Tal-Sosonko, Brussels 1987: 12.♗b2 ♖e8 13.f3 ♕b6 14.♖b1 ♕c5 15.♔h1 ♗e6 16.♖c1 ♘d7 17.♗b1 (the d4 pawn is now going to fall, so Black has to try to get some of the other white pawns) 17...♕b6 18.♗a1 ♘de5 (it seems that Black is going after the wrong pawn. Better was 18...♕a6 19.♘xd4 ♕xa3 20.♗d3 ♘xd4 21.♗xd4 and White should have compensation, but no more) 19.♘xd4 ♗xc4 20.♘xc6! bxc6 21.♖e1 ♖ad8 22.f4 ♗b3 23.♕e2 ♘g6 24.♕g4! ♕f2 25.♖f1 ♕h4 26.♕xh4 ♘xh4 27.f5! and the knight is trapped.

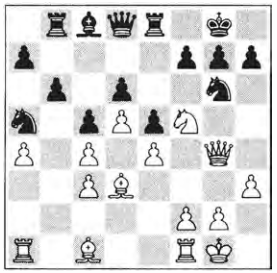
11. d4-d5 ♘c6-a5?!

The knight will stay here, doing nothing, for quite some time. Maybe I have too much of an aversion for this kind of moves, but 11...♘e7 looks like an almost automatic reply to me in such positions.

12. ♘e2-g3 ♖a8-b8
13. a3-a4 ♖f8-e8
14. h2-h3

Getting ready for f2-f4. Imagine Black had played 11...♘e7; in that case 14...♘g6 would have been a simple solution here. Now, in order to properly control the e5-square, Black has to allow the white knight on f5.

14. ... ♘f6-d7
15. ♘g3-f5 ♘d7-f8
16. ♕d1-g4 ♘f8-g6



17. ♗c1-g5!

Depriving the black queen of the f6-square. In case of the immediate 17.♗e3, Black would have good play after 17...h6! 18.g3 ♕f6.

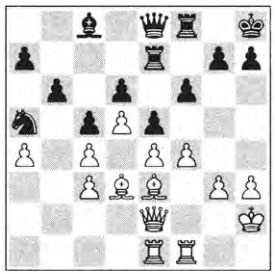
17. ... f7-f6
18. ♗g5-e3 ♖b8-b7
19. g2-g3 ♖b7-f7
20. ♔g1-h2 ♔g8-h8
21. ♕g4-h5

White is slowly getting ready for the pawn advance on the kingside, while Black has no adequate counterplay to keep White busy.

21. ... ♖f7-f8
22. ♖a1-e1 ♘g6-e7

Exchanging off the annoying knight on f5. White will, however, start his pawn avalanche with f2-f4, not afraid to sacrifice a pawn (or more) in the process, because with the black knight stranded on a5, White is practically a piece up.

23. ♘f5xe7 ♖e8xe7
24. f2-f4! ♕d8-e8
25. ♕h5-e2



25. ... ♖e7-f7

Black has to choose between two strategic options here:

A) to take the a4 pawn and hope for queenside counterplay, allowing White to advance his kingside pawns, or

B) to take on f4, allowing the central pawn break, but eliminating the kingside pawn push.

It's a difficult decision, and it's impossible to calculate over the board. Black finally goes for option A. Option B would not have solved his problems either, because in most of the critical lines, he is practically a piece down, for example: 25...exf4 26.gxf4 ♕xa4 (in case of 26...f5 White would get a strong attack with 27.e5! dxe5 28.fxe5 ♖xe5 29.♕f2 ♕xa4 30.♖g1! and now 30...♕d7 (or 30...♖fe8 31.♗h6! ♖xe1 (on 31...gxh6 32.♕h4 ♕a2+ 33.♔h1 White soon delivers mate) 32.♗xg7+ ♔g8 33.♗e5+ ♖xg1 34.♕xg1+ ♔f7 35.♕g7+ mate) 31.♗h6! wins) 27.♖g1 (White has enough compensation also after 27.♕h5, with the following possible variation: 27...♘xc4 28.e5 g6 29.♕h6 ♖g7 30.exf6! ♖xf6 31.♗xc4 ♕xc4 32.♗d4! cxd4 33.♖e8+ ♖g8 34.♖e7 and White wins) 27...♖fe8 28.♕h5, with a strong attack worth much more than a pawn.

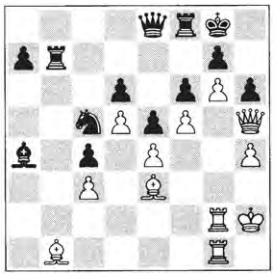
26. f4-f5! ♗c8-d7
27. h3-h4 ♗d7xa4
28. g3-g4

The pawns will advance and White's dark-squared bishop will later be sacrificed – a standard sacrifice in these positions – to clear the way for the further advance of the foot soldiers. Black is helpless.

28. ... b6-b5
29. c4xb5 c5-c4
30. ♗d3-b1 ♕e8xb5
31. g4-g5 ♖f7-b7
32. ♕e2-h5 ♕b5-e8
33. g5-g6! h7-h6

Now White has to get ready to sacrifice his bishop on h6.

34. ♖f1-g1 ♔h8-g8
35. ♖e1-e2 ♘a5-b3
36. ♖e2-g2 ♘b3-c5



37. ♗e3xh6! g7xh6
38. ♕h5xh6 ♖b7-g7
39. h4-h5

The road has been cleared for the white foot soldiers to decide the battle.

39. ... ♕e8-b5
40. ♕h6-e3 ♖f8-b8
41. h5-h6 ♕b5-d7

Or 41...♖gb7 42.g7.

42. h6xg7

Black resigned.

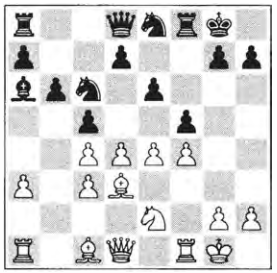
When a wrong strategic decision is taken at the start, then any player (world-class included) risks losing the game without firing a bullet.

Stranded black knight on the queenside – White has a mobile pawn centre

I would be a liar if I were to claim that piling up minor pieces on the queenside and being slaughtered on the kingside, is a disaster which I have never experienced. The following game is a good example of how things can go wrong.

NI 18.13 (E29) **GAME 10**
Zsuzsa Polgar
Ivan Sokolov
Pardubice 1994 (4)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. e2-e3 ♘b8-c6
7. ♗f1-d3 0-0
8. ♘g1-e2 b7-b6
9. e3-e4 ♘f6-e8
10. 0-0 ♗c8-a6
11. f2-f4 f7-f5



So far a well-known position, and one of the main lines of the Sämisch Nimzo-Indian.

12. ♘e2-g3 g7-g6

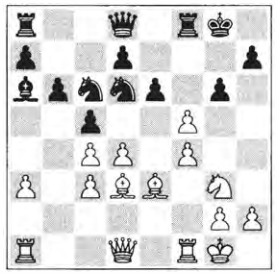
13. ♗c1-e3 ♘e8-d6!?

This variation owes a considerable deal of its popularity to the efforts of Artur Yusupov. A number of times Artur tried this variation as White, also against 12th World Champion Anatoly Karpov. Karpov scored well in those encounters.

This variation came as a slight surprise to me, so I was trying to remember those Yusupov-Karpov games. I did remember that in one of the games there was a pawn exchange in the centre with 13...cxd4 14.cxd4 d5, and Black obtained an equal game (Yusupov-Karpov, Linares 1993), while in the other game between the same opponents, a different plan was tried: the c4 pawn was immediately attacked – a plan which appealed to me more at the time.

14. e4xf5

14.dxc5 ♘xc4 is good for Black. The immediate 14.♕e2 does not promise anything: 14...fxe4! 15.♘xe4 ♘xe4 16.♗xe4 d5 17.♕g4 (Black is better after 17.♗d3 cxd4 18.cxd4 (18.♗xd4? does not work due to 18...♘xd4 19.cxd4 dxc4 20.♕xe6+ ♔g7) 18...♗xc4 19.♗xc4 dxc4 20.♕xc4 ♕d5) 17...dxe4 18.♕xe6+ ♖f7 19.♕xc6 ♗xc4.



14. ... g6xf5?

If you have not done your homework properly or you have forgotten your preparation, then it is better to look for the moves over the board instead of trying to 'remember' the theory – or your preparation. Firmly believing I was still in one of the Karpov games, the only question I asked myself was with which pawn to recapture (taking with the e-pawn was better, by the way).

14...♘xc4! was played in Game 3 of the Yusupov-Karpov Candidates' Match, London 1989, and after 15.♗xc4 ♗xc4 16.fxg6 ♗xf1 17.♕h5 ♕e7 18.♖xf1 hxg6 19.♕xg6+ ♕g7 20.♕d3 cxd4 21.cxd4 ♕h7! White did not have enough compensation for the sacrificed exchange. Black consolidated and went on to win.

15. ♕d1-e2!

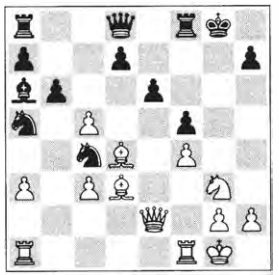
The correct reaction, taking advantage of Black's mix-up. There is no possibility to take on e4 any longer, so note that the main source of Black's counterplay has disappeared! (see the comment to 14.exf5) White is firmly in control. Black's position is already critical. Somewhere around here I started to realize that I was definitely not following any of Karpov's games. Things are soon going to deteriorate further.

15. ... ♘c6-a5

Taking on d4 first does not solve Black's problems: 15...cxd4 16.cxd4 ♘a5 17.c5 ♗xd3 18.♕xd3 ♘dc4 19.d5! ♘xe3 (or 19...♖c8 20.♗f2! bxc5 21.♖ac1) 20.♕xe3 ♕f6 (20...exd5? 21.♖ad1 only helps White) 21.♖ad1 and due to his better pawn structure and safer king, White is better.

16. d4xc5 ♘d6xc4

17. ♗e3-d4



White has three minor pieces (bishop pair and knight) well-coordinated and ready to attack, while Black has his three minor pieces piled up on the edge of the board and completely out of play.

17. ... b6xc5

18. ♗d4xc5 ♖f8-f6

19. ♖a1-b1 ♖f6-g6

20. ♗c5-d4 ♖a8-c8

a7 is a pawn Black would prefer to keep, but it is difficult to give good advice here. White is well-coordinated and ready to deliver a lethal blow.

In the event of 20...♕c7?, 21.♘xf5! quickly decides: 21...exf5 22.♗xf5 ♘c6 (22...♘d6? loses immediately to 23.♕e5) 23.♗xg6 hxg6 24.f5 and White wins.

21. ♗d4xa7 ♕d8-c7

22. ♗a7-d4

White is a sound pawn up, while Black has not solved any of his problems. It is safe to say that Black is completely lost here. I remember wondering at the time how it was possible to end up in a completely lost position in a mere 20 moves, more than half of which were established theory, without making any obvious mistake.

Well, the mistake on the 14th move (14...gxf5?) is indeed not an obvious one, but it was a very serious strategic error which allowed White to easily achieve her strategic goals and determined the course of the game.

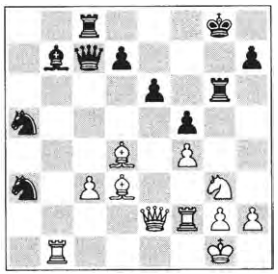
22. ... ♗a6-b7

22...♘c6? is a blunder due to 23.♘xf5+–.

23. ♖f1-f2

Defending her only potential weakness. There was also nothing wrong with the simple 23.a4, keeping the pawn.

23. ... ♘c4xa3



24. ♖b1-e1

I guess White decided to trust me and did not fully explore the consequences of 24.♗b6!, which would have won because Black's tactics do not work, for instance: 24...♕b8 (24...♕c6 25.♗xa5 ♘xb1 26.♗xb1 ♖a8 27.♗b4 ♖a1 28.♕b2 ♕a4 29.c4 with 30.♗c3 to follow) 25.♖b4! (25.♗xa5 ♘xb1 26.♗xb1 ♗xg2 27.♔xg2 ♕xb1 was something I was hoping for, with

chances to survive) 25...♘5c4 (after 25...♘3c4? 26.♗xc4 Black loses a piece without any tricks) 26.♗xc4 (White can also decide not to bother about Black's tricks and win in a direct attack after 26.♗d4 ♕c7 27.♗xf5! exf5 28.♘xf5) 26...♖xc4 27.♖xc4 ♗a6. Now it seems that Black has managed to create a mess after all. However, White has 28.♗a7! (a move difficult to see from a distance) 28...♕b1+ (or 28...♕xa7 29.♖a4) 29.♖f1 ♕b7 30.♖c7!, winning.

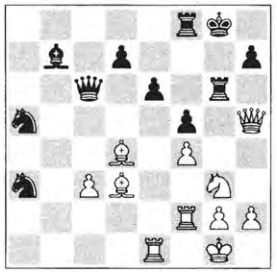
24. ... ♖c8-f8

In the case of 24...♘3c4 the standard sacrifice 25.♗xf5! exf5 26.♘xf5 quickly decides.

25. ♕e2-h5!

White is now attacking the black king with all his pieces. As for the defenders – well, I'd say that it would not be easy to find worse squares on the entire board for the black knights.

25. ... ♕c7-c6



26. ♗d3-e4!

Probably even stronger was 26.♘e4! and White wins in the attack: 26...fxe4 (or 26...♖f7 27.♘g5) 27.♗xe4 ♖f5 28.♕h4! ♕c8 (White also wins in the event of 28...♕b5 29.♗xf5 ♕xf5 30.♕d8+ ♔f7 31.♕xd7+ or 28...♕xe4 29.♖xe4 ♗xe4 30.♕d8+ ♔f7 31.♕xd7+) 29.♗xf5 exf5 30.♖e7 h6 31.♕h5! ♕c6 32.♖e8+ ♔f7 33.♖fe2 and the only way for Black to prevent the immediate mate is to give a full queen.

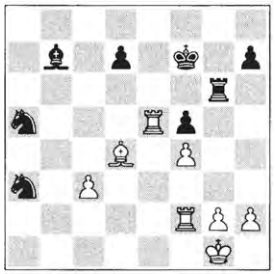
26. ... ♕c6-b5

The bishop cannot be taken, since after 26...fxe4 White has 27.♕e5! (the point behind the piece sac) 27...♖ff6 28.♘xe4 winning, while the ugly 26...d5? would shut off the only source of Black's counterplay, the a8-h1 diagonal, and would lose immediately after 27.♗xf5.

27. ♗e4xf5! ♖f8xf5

On 27...exf5?, 28.♖e7 wins.

28. ♘g3xf5 ♕b5xf5
29. ♕h5xf5 e6xf5
30. ♖e1-e8+! ♔g8-f7
31. ♖e8-e5



The smoke has cleared. It will still take Black quite some time to coordinate his pieces, while White's passed pawns on the kingside will decide.

31. ... ♘a5-c6
32. ♖e5xf5+ ♔f7-e6
33. ♖f5-c5

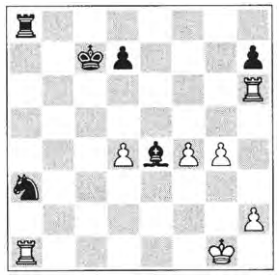
33.♖h5 also wins. The text, however, underlines all the misery caused by the knight being on a3.

33. ... ♖g6-g8
34. ♖f2-e2+ ♔e6-d6

35. ♖e2-a2 ♖g8-a8
36. ♖c5-h5 ♘c6xd4
37. c3xd4 ♗b7-d5

37...♗e4 does not help due to 38.♖h6+! ♔d5 (or 38...♔e7 39.g4 and the white pawns decide) 39.♖h3.

38. ♖h5-h6+ ♔d6-c7
39. ♖a2-a1 ♗d5-e4
40. g2-g4



White is rolling her pawns forward, while the pin along the a-file prevents Black from organizing any kind of counterplay.

40. ... d7-d6
41. f4-f5 ♔c7-c6
42. ♖h6xh7 ♔c6-d5
43. ♖h7-h3 ♖a8-g8
44. ♖a1xa3

At last some good news. After twenty moves I have managed to get rid of my terrible knight!

44. ... ♖g8xg4+
45. ♖h3-g3

Also sufficient was 45.♔f2!? ♔xd4 46.f6 ♖g2+ (46...♖f4+ 47.♖hf3+–) 47.♔f1 ♖g6 48.♖a4+ ♔e5 49.♖h5+ ♗f5 50.♖a5+ d5 51.♖xd5+ ♔xd5 52.♖xf5+ +–.

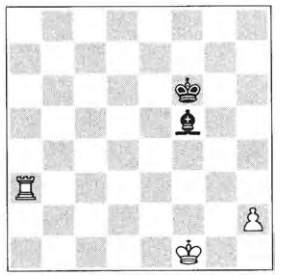
45. ... ♖g4-f4
46. ♖g3-g6! ♔d5xd4

46...♗xf5 (Hecht) 47.♖f6 ♖g4+ 48.♖g3 ♖f4 49.♖g5+–.

47. ♖g6xd6+ ♔d4-e5
48. ♖d6-d1 ♗e4xf5
49. ♖d1-f1 ♖f4xf1+

49...♖g4+ 50.♖g3+–.

50. ♔g1xf1 ♔e5-f6



51. ♖a3-g3!

The black king remains cut off forever.

51. ... ♗f5-g6
52. h2-h4 1-0

The win is very simple, for example: 52...♔f5 53.♔f2 ♔f6 54.♔f3 ♔f5 55.♖g5+ ♔f6 56.♔f4 ♗d3 57.h5 ♗c2 58.h6 ♗g6 59.♖g1 ♗c2 (59...♔f7 60.♔e5) 60.♖g7 ♗d3 61.♖a7 ♗c2 62.h7.

Many times I have also been sitting on the right side of the board.

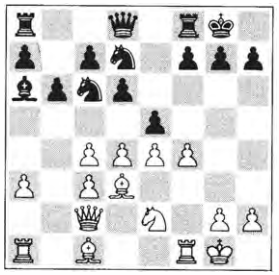
NI 24.13 (E32) **GAME 11**

Ivan Sokolov
Viktor Bologan
Sarajevo 2004 (4)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. ♕d1-c2 0-0
5. e2-e4 d7-d6
6. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
7. b2xc3 e6-e5
8. ♗f1-d3 ♘b8-c6
9. ♘g1-e2 b7-b6

In the 4.♕c2 Nimzo, this kind of pawn structure normally does not appear. Here, in this sideline starting with 5.e4 d6, the pawn structure resembles the Sämisch Nimzo and most of the rules apply.

10. 0-0 ♗c8-a6
11. f2-f4 ♘f6-d7



White is trying to keep his pawn centre flexible, while Black wants to target the c4 weakness.

12. ♖f1-f3!?

The introduction to an interesting concept. In my game against Anatoly Karpov, Hoogeveen 2003, 12.♗e3 was played.

12. ... ♘c6-a5

Black targets White's only weakness.

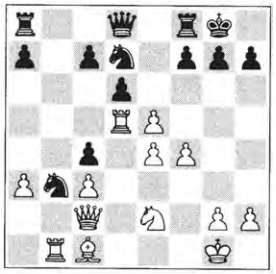
13. c4-c5

Trying to make use of the fact that the bishop can be recaptured with the rook, when pressure along the d-file will be exerted. Opting for the text, I underestimated Black's defensive resources. Very much in the spirit of the position was 13.♘g3! ♗xc4 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♘f5 and White gets an initiative on the kingside which definitely compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

13. ... ♗a6xd3
14. ♖f3xd3 b6xc5
15. d4xe5 c5-c4!

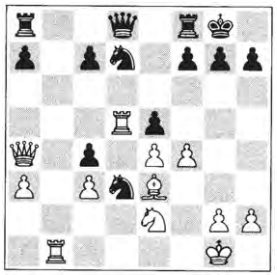
An important zwischenzug. 15...dxe5?? would be a terrible blunder that simply loses a piece after 16.♕d1.

16. ♖d3-d5 ♘a5-b3
17. ♖a1-b1



17. ... ♕d8-e7

With the inclusion of the last two moves things have changed and 17...dxe5! was now possible: 18.♕d1 (not 18.♖xb3? cxb3 19.♕d2 c6 20.♖xd7 ♕b6+ 21.♔f1 ♖ad8 and the black b-pawn would decide the outcome) 18...♘bc5 19.♗e3 ♘d3! (19...♕e7? 20.♗xc5 ♘xc5 21.♖xe5 is clearly better for White) 20.♕a4.



analysis diagram

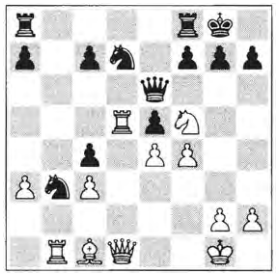
Both players had seen this position, both had concluded that White wins a piece and stopped exploring further. However, tactics now start to work for Black: 20...exf4! 21.♖xd7 (bad for White is 21.♗xf4? ♕h4 22.g3 ♕g4, while after 21.♗d4 c5! 22.♖xd7 ♕e8 White has to return the piece with 23.♕c6 cxd4 24.cxd4 ♖d8 25.♖c7) 21...♕e8!. The white queen on a4 is not defended and due to the e8-a4 pin, Black gets his material back, obtaining the better game after 22.♘xf4 ♘e5 (not 22...♖d8?? 23.♘xd3 cxd3 24.♖d4) 23.♖bd1 ♖d8 24.♗c5 ♖xd7.

18. ♘e2-g3

Heading for its optimal square: f5.

18. ... d6xe5
19. ♘g3-f5 ♕e7-e6
20. ♕c2-d1!

With this tempo White is hoping to win the e5 pawn.



20. ... ♘d7-f6

Black had a tactical option in 20...exf4! (20...♖ad8? is wrong after the simple 21.fxe5, and Black has stepped into the pin for no reason at all) 21.♕g4! (the white pieces would be extremely clumsy after 21.♖xd7? ♕xe4 and Black gets back his piece, with a winning advantage after 22.♘e7+ ♔h8 23.♖b2 ♘xc1! 24.♕xc1 ♖ae8 25.♘d5 ♕e6!) 21...g6 22.♖xd7 ♕xe4 23.♘e7+ ♔g7 24.♕xf4 and now Black saves the game with 24...♕e1+! 25.♕f1 ♕e6! and White has nothing better than to force a draw by perpetual check after 26.♖xc7 ♕b6+ 27.♕f2 ♕xc7 28.♗h6+! ♔xh6 29.♕h4+ ♔g7 30.♘f5+ gxf5 31.♕g5+. Winning tries could get White in trouble: 26.♗g5 h6!, or 26.♕d1 ♖ae8 27.♗g5 h6 28.♘xg6 ♔xg6!; not 28...♕xg6 29.♗e7.

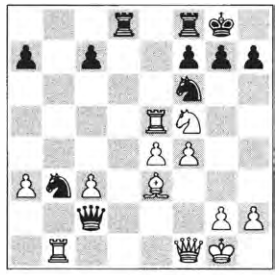
21. ♖d5xe5 ♖a8-d8!

An important tempo.

22. ♕d1-e2 ♕e6-d7
23. ♕e2xc4!

This pawn has to be eliminated, among other things to undermine the position of the b3 knight. A mistake would be 23.♗e3? ♕d3 with an advantage for Black.

23. ... ♕d7-d1+
24. ♕c4-f1 ♕d1-c2
25. ♗c1-e3



25. ... ♘f6xe4?

Critical moment. Black is moving his second knight away from his king. Even though it seems Black is taking over the initiative, very soon White will develop a direct attack against the black king while Black's knights will be stranded on the wrong side of the board.

It was necessary for Black to anticipate the danger and find 25...♘d2! (taking a pawn with 25...♕xc3 does not help due to 26.♕e1!). Now, a long variation peters out in a dead-drawn rook ending: 26.♖c1 ♕b2 27.♖b5! ♕xa3

28.♗c5 ♕a6 29.♖a1 ♘xf1! 30.♖xa6 ♖d1! 31.♖xf6! ♘d2+! 32.♔f2 ♘xe4+ 33.♔f3 ♘xf6 34.♗xf8 ♔xf8 35.♖b8+ ♘e8 36.♘xg7 ♔xg7 37.♖xe8 ♖d3+ 38.♔g4 ♖xc3 39.♖a8 ♖a3 40.♖c8.

26. ♖b1-e1!

White has moved all his pieces to the side of the board where the action is.

26. ... ♘e4xc3

27. ♕f1-f3!

Focusing on the black king. I was no longer interested in settling for a small advantage after 27.♕f2 ♕xf2+ 28.♗xf2.

27. ... ♖d8-d1

28. ♗e3-f2 g7-g6?

Allowing a quick execution. However, Black's pieces (queen and two knights) are far away from their monarch and it is difficult to defend here.

29. ♘f5-h6+! ♔g8-g7

30. f4-f5!

White has a winning attack.

30. ... ♔g7xh6

30...♘d2 loses to the attractive 31.f6+ ♔h8 32.♘xf7+! ♔g8 33.♘h6+ ♔h8 34.♕e3 ♘de4 35.♖e8! ♖xe8 36.f7 ♖ed8 37.♕d4+ ♖1xd4 38.♗xd4+.

31. f5-f6

The escape route for the black king is cut off.

31. ... ♖d1xe1+

White delivers a forced mate after 31...g5 32.♕h3+ ♔g6 33.♖xg5+! ♔xg5 34.♗h4+! ♔h5 35.♗g3+ ♔g5 36.♕h4+ ♔f5 37.♕f4+ ♔g6 38.♕g4+ ♔xf6 39.♗h4 mate.

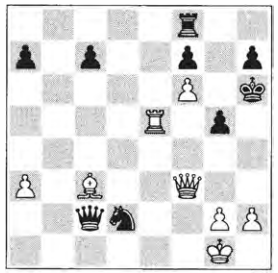
32. ♗f2xe1 g6-g5

33. ♗e1xc3

Missing the best execution: 33.h4! ♘d4 34.♕g4 ♖g8 35.♖xg5.

33. ... ♘b3-d2

The best defence was 33...♖d8. However, White wins after 34.♗e1! (protecting the first rank by eliminating the checks) 34...♘d4 35.♕g4 ♘e6 36.h4! ♕c1 37.hxg5+ ♘xg5 38.♔h2! (freeing the bishop from the pin) 38...♖d3 39.♗b4.



34. ♕f3-e3!

The last difficult move. Black soon runs out of checks.

34. ... ♕c2-c1+

35. ♔g1-f2 ♕c1-f1+

36. ♔f2-g3 ♕f1-f4+

37. ♕e3xf4 g5xf4+

38. ♔g3xf4 ♘d2-c4

39. ♖e5-c5 ♘c4xa3

40. ♔f4-f5 ♖f8-d8

41. ♗c3-e5 1-0

White soon delivers mate, while the black knight ends its career at an undesirable square.

VO 22.12 (A40) **GAME 12**

Ivan Sokolov
Emir Dizdarevic
Sarajevo 1998 (9)

1. d2-d4 e7-e6

2. c2-c4 ♗f8-b4+

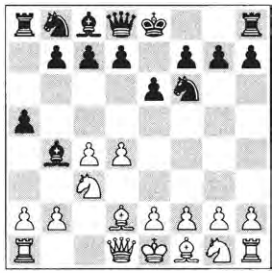
3. ♗c1-d2 a7-a5

4. ♘b1-c3!

Steering the game into Nimzo-Indian positions where the inclusion of the moves ♗d2 a5 is going to favour White.

In a lot of variations, having the pawn on a5 will be to Black's disadvantage.

4. ... ♘g8-f6



5. e2-e4!

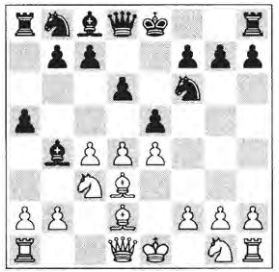
Taking immediate advantage of the inclusion of the moves 3.♗d2 a5. Another interesting option is 5.♗g5, when the extra move 3...a5 is probably working against Black.

5. ... d7-d6

Taking the pawn with 5...♗xc3 6.♗xc3 ♘xe4 only helps White, since after 7.♕g4 f5 (after 7...♘xc3? 8.♕xg7 ♖f8 9.bxc3, with the black king stuck in the centre, White is much better) 8.♕xg7 ♕f6 9.♕xf6 ♘xf6 10.d5, his bishop pair and better pawn structure ensure White a clear advantage.

6. ♗f1-d3 e6-e5

It was not the first time I tried this set-up as White. In my game against Michael Adams, Wijk aan Zee 1996, play continued 6...c5 7.d5 (also an interesting idea, similar to this game, was 7.a3 ♗xc3 8.bxc3! ♘c6 9.♘e2) 7...♗xc3 8.♗xc3 exd5 9.exd5 0-0 10.♘e2 ♘bd7 11.0-0 ♖e8 12.♘g3 and White was clearly better. With the text Black would like to provoke White into making a decision in the centre. However, this is not going to happen. With his next move White strengthens his centre and keeps it flexible, achieving a very favourable version of the Nimzo-Indian.



7. a2-a3! ♗b4xc3

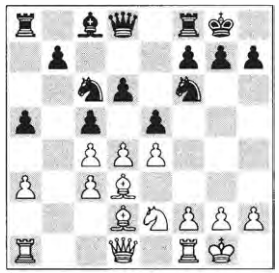
8. b2xc3

It is rather obvious that here the extra move ...a7-a5 is useless.

8. ... c7-c5

9. ♘g1-e2 ♘b8-c6

10. 0-0 0-0



11. f2-f3!

It is important for White to keep his centre flexible and push f4 at a favourable moment. White also prepares 12.♗e3. As usual in such positions, White has no reason to worry about Black taking on d4, as already explained in the notes to Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky. The immediate 11.f2-f4? would have been a mistake, since after 11...exd4 12.cxd4 cxd4 Black would transfer his

f6 knight either via g4 to e3 or via d7 to c5, making use of the weakness just created in the white camp.

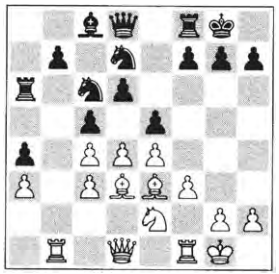
11. ... ♘f6-d7?!

Taking on d4 would now produce a very different result: 11...exd4 12.cxd4 cxd4 (exchanging a pair of knights does not change much. White is also better after 12...♘xd4 13.♘xd4 cxd4 14.♗g5 ♕e7 15.♖b1) 13.♗g5 ♕e7 14.f4 (14.♖b1 is also good) 14...h6 15.♗h4 ♕e6 16.♘g3 and White gets a strong initiative worth much more than a pawn.

Black's plan to transfer his c6 knight to b3 is an attempt to justify the a-pawn push. However, it is not going to work, since White will be quick with his kingside attack. It was better to leave the knight on f6 and play a few useful moves, like ...♖e8 and ...h6.

12. ♗d2-e3 a5-a4

13. ♖a1-b1 ♖a8-a6



14. f3-f4!

The time has come to start action in the centre/on the kingside.

14. ... ♘c6-a5

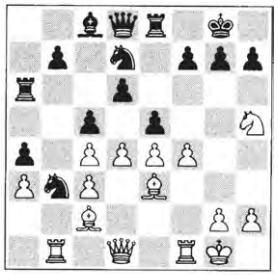
Black carries on with his plan as if nothing had happened. However, there are no really satisfactory options and it all boils down to a choice between evils. White is also clearly better after 14...exd4 15.cxd4 cxd4 16.♘xd4 ♘c5 (on 16...♖e8, rather strong is 17.c5! dxc5 18.♘f5 ♖b6 19.e5) 17.♘b5.

15. ♘e2-g3 ♘a5-b3

16. ♗d3-c2 ♖f8-e8

17. ♘g3-h5!

Black's knight is rather irrelevant on b3 and he does not have any meaningful counterplay. On the other hand, the white onslaught on the kingside is soon going to be impossible to ward off.

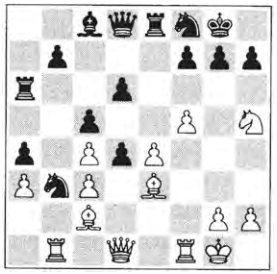


17. ... ♘d7-f8?

The final mistake. Now the white attack becomes impossible to stop. Though not an easy move to play, the best defence was 17...g6! 18.♘g3 cxd4 19.cxd4 exd4 20.♗xd4 ♘xd4 21.♕xd4 ♘c5 and Black would still be in the game.

18. f4-f5! e5xd4

Probably best under the circumstances. Black loses immediately after 18...f6? 19.♕g4 ♕e7 20.♗h6 g6 21.♕g3.



19. ♕d1-g4! ♘f8-g6

The only move. In case of 19...g6 White obtains a mating attack with 20.♗g5! gxh5 21.♕g3 ♕d7 22.♗f6+ ♘g6 23.♕g5 d5 24.e5.

20. c3xd4 c5xd4

21. ♗e3-f2

The pin along the g-file is terrible for Black, so White has enough time to prepare the execution.

21. ... ♕d8-e7

21...♘d2 loses to 22.♗xd4! ♘xf1 23.♖xf1 f6 24.♕g3.

22. ♗c2xb3!

Now, 22.♕g3 would offer Black some chances of survival after 22...♕e5! 23.fxg6 ♕xh5 24.gxf7+ ♕xf7 25.♗xb3 axb3 26.♗xd4 ♕g6.

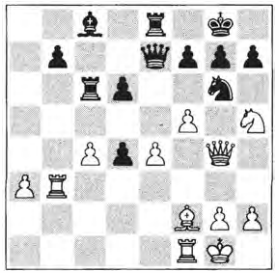
22. ... a4xb3

23. ♖b1xb3

As the last attacking piece, the second rook joins White's attacking forces, forcing resignation.

23. ... ♖a6-c6

Or 23...f6 24.♕d1! ♘e5 25.♖g3 g6 26.fxg6 hxg6 27.♗xd4 and White wins.



24. ♕g4-d1! ♘g6-e5

25. ♗f2xd4 ♔g8-h8

26. f5-f6 1-0

Black is mated soon, for instance: 26.f6 gxf6 27.♘xf6 ♖g8 28.♕h5 ♖g7 29.♖g3 ♕f8 30.♕h6, with ♘h7 to follow.

The following game is a good example of a strategic and tactical battle in positions with doubled pawns and a full centre. Anand does everything contrary to the general set of strategic rules I have been trying to explain and to the examples I have given so far.

Black opts for the inferior opening variation, then voluntarily strands his knight on a5 without having any realistic chances to ever take on c4. White, meanwhile, gets his flexible pawn centre ready to roll and has well-developed pieces to support it, without having to make any concessions from his side.

At first sight it looks as if, with all those trumps, White should be having a sizeable advantage (as indeed he had). Black then comes up with a rather ingenious strategic plan, starting with 12...g5, which is worth studying and remembering. However, the black plan involves a weakening of his king and with White's advantage in space as well as development, the position should logically contain a tactical blow. The problem with such tactical solutions is that they must be detected and executed at once. Being just one move late will allow the opponent to coordinate his pieces and the possibility is lost forever.

Even though this was a rapid game, it was well played, rather complex and an excellent learning example.

NI 19.3 (E26) **GAME 13**

Teimour Radjabov
Viswanathan Anand

Monaco (rapid) 2007 (2)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

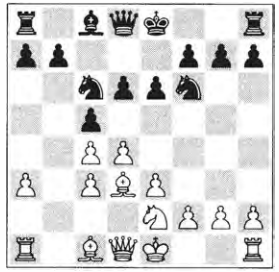
2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4

4. a2-a3 ♗b4xc3+
5. b2xc3 c7-c5
6. e2-e3 d7-d6?!

It is difficult to explain why Vishy rejected the usual 6...♘c6 and opted for the inferior text. White now gets a very good version of the well-known Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian.

7. ♗f1-d3 ♘b8-c6
8. ♘g1-e2



Black's next two moves are rather surprising. First he loses time playing ...b6 and then he strands his knight with ...♘a5, even though it is rather clear that there will be no time to take the c4 pawn. Meanwhile, White follows the standard procedure, improving his position and getting ready to strike.

Had I not known the names of the players, I would have thought that the black player must be a complete patzer. However, in chess as in life things are often not the way they seem.

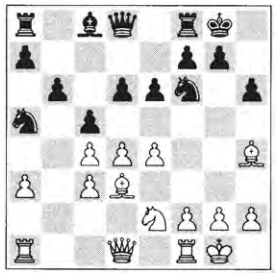
8. ... b7-b6?!
9. e3-e4 ♘c6-a5
10. 0-0

Pinning the knight immediately with 10.♗g5 is also an option.

10. ... 0-0
11. ♗c1-g5

Here, the standard idea 11.f4 is definitely an option. White should not fear sacrificing his c4 pawn; after 11...♗a6 12.f5 ♗xc4 (or 12...e5 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗h4) 13.♗g5 he will have good compensation.

11. ... h7-h6
12. ♗g5-h4



Anand understands that things are developing very much White's way, so with the following sequence of moves he embarks on a risky strategy, exposing his king but trying to shut in both of White's bishops.

12. ... g7-g5!
13. ♗h4-g3 ♘f6-h5
14. f2-f4 f7-f5!

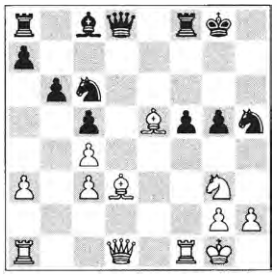
Black stops the white advance and hampers both the enemy bishops' movements. Even though with his two knights on a5 and h5 Black's strategy is highly risky, it is far from easy to find something clear for White. If he is to take advantage of his better development and Black's potentially exposed king, it will have to be done either by a sacrifice or by a pawn breakthrough in the centre. And the sooner the better, before Black coordinates his pieces.

15. ♕d1-c2?!

White has to act before Black gets organized. White is at the moment very

well-developed and coordinated, so the time to act was NOW!

Black would have been in trouble after 15.dxc5! dxc5 16.fxg5 hxg5 17.exf5 exf5. Now the position is open and White has to use this opportunity with 18.♗e5! (otherwise Black plays 18... f4) 18...♘c6 (bringing the knight back into play and attacking the bishop) 19.♘g3!.



analysis diagram

The point of the previous move. Black is now going to feel the consequences of exposing his king:

A) 19...♘xe5 20.♕xh5 ♘xd3 21.♖ad1! (naturally White is not interested in the perpetual with 21.♕g6+) 21...♕f6 22.♘e4! (bringing in an extra attacking piece) 22...♕g7 23.♖xd3! fxe4 24.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 25.♖d8+ ♔e7 26.♕e8+ ♔f6 27.♕c6+ and White wins;

B) 19...♕e8 20.♗e4! (making maximum use of the exposed black king) 20...♘xg3 (20...fxe4 loses to 21.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 (or 21...♔xf8 22.♕d6+) 22.♕d5+ ♕f7 23.♕xc6) 21.♗d5+ ♗e6 22.♗xg3 and White has a winning advantage;

C) 19...♘xg3 (probably best under the circumstances. The other moves only underline the weakness of his kingside) 20.♗xg3 f4 21.♗e4! ♕xd1 22.♖axd1 fxg3 (other moves do not solve the problems either: 22...♗g4 23.♖d5; 22...♗b7 23.♖d7 fxg3 24.♗d5+ ♔h8 25.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 26.♖xb7) 23.♗xc6 gxh2+ 24.♔xh2 with a big advantage for White in the endgame.

15. ... g5-g4!

Excellent move. White's g3 bishop is now shut off and tactical possibilities are eliminated. Black has positional control now. White missed the critical moment to act when he played the timid 15.♕c2.

16. ♖a1-d1 ♘h5-g7
17. ♗g3-f2 ♕d8-c7
18. ♘e2-g3 h6-h5
19. ♖f1-e1 ♕c7-f7
20. e4-e5

With both of his bishops locked in, White wants to open up the position. Trying a different central break does not promise anything: 20.d5 exd5 21.cxd5 c4 22.♗f1 h4! 23.♘xf5 ♘xf5 24.exf5 ♗xf5 and Black has a good game.

20. ... d6xe5
21. ♖e1xe5 ♘a5-c6
22. ♖e5-e1 ♕f7-c7
23. d4-d5 ♘c6-d8!

As long as Black maintains the blockade c4 versus c5 and f4-f5, it will be difficult for White to activate his bishops.

24. ♘g3-e2 ♕c7-e7!

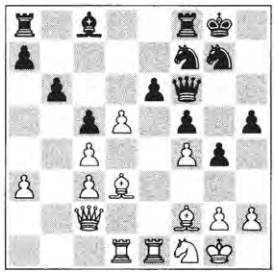
Not allowing 25.♗h4.

25. ♘e2-g3 ♕e7-f6

Black wants more than a draw, which could have been achieved by returning to c7.

26. ♘g3-f1 ♘d8-f7

Black is about to take over, so White has to act energetically. Choosing simple moves will result in an inferior position.



27. d5xe6

Better was 27.♘e3! e5 28.d6! (freeing the d5-square for the knight) 28...e4! (this tempo-winning move is logical and good. Wrong would be 28...♗e6? 29.fxe5 ♘xe5 30.♗f1! ♖ad8 31.♘d5 ♗xd5 32.♖xd5 ♖fe8 33.d7! ♖e7 34.♕d2 with a clear advantage for White) 29.♗xe4! fxe4 30.♘d5 ♕xd6 31.♗h4 ♕e6! (the best defence, even though it does not look logical. Black puts his queen 'under the tempo' (♖xe4) in order not to allow the centralization of the white queen (♕xe4) after 31...♕h6? 32.♘e7+ ♔h8 33.♕xe4 ♗a6 (or 33...♗e6 34.f5) 34.f5 with a winning attack) 32.♖xe4 ♕h6 33.♘e7+ ♔h8 34.♖ee1! (threatening 35.♘g6+) 34...♖e8 35.♘g6+ (wrong is 35.f5? due to 35...♖xe7 36.♖xe7 ♗xf5)

analysis diagram

35...♔h7!! (exposing his king to the discovered check is the only defence. White wins in case of 35...♔g8 36.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 37.♕e4! ♘c7 38.f5 ♗a6 (38...♖b8 39.♕e7! ♗xf5 40.♕xc7 ♖e8 41.♘e7+) 39.♖d7! ♕c1+ 40.♗e1 ♖e8 41.♘e7+ ♖xe7 42.♖xe7 ♘d6 43.♕e5) 36.♘e7+ ♔h8 37.♘g6+ ♔h7 and White has to agree to perpetual check, since 38.♖xe8? fails to 38...♕xg6!.

27. ... ♗c8xe6
28. ♘f1-e3 ♖a8-d8

Black has connected and coordinated all his pieces. White has missed his tactical opportunities and is now worse.

29. ♗d3-f1 ♖d8xd1
30. ♖e1xd1 h5-h4!
31. ♘e3-d5

Hoping to open a diagonal for one of his bishops.

31. ... ♗e6xd5
32. c4xd5 ♘f7-d6
33. ♗f1-d3 ♘g7-h5
34. g2-g3 ♖f8-e8

Possibly even stronger was 34...c4!. I guess Anand didn't want to allow White's dark-squared bishop to d4. However, then its d3 colleague would be sent to f1 and end up completely dead after 35.♗f1 ♖e8 36.♗d4 ♕h6 37.♕g2 ♘f6. Black is much better.

35. c3-c4 ♔g8-f7
36. ♕c2-a4! ♖e8-e7
37. ♕a4-c6 h4xg3
38. h2xg3

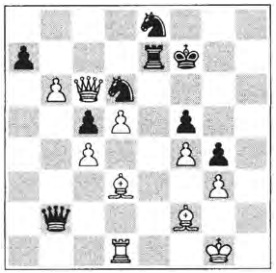
38. ... ♘h5-g7!

Strong play. By bringing his h5 knight to e8 Black releases his queen. 38...♘e4 would not offer more than a drawish ending after 39.♗xe4 ♕xc6 40.dxc6 fxe4 41.f5 ♔f6 42.♖d6+ ♔xf5 43.♖d5+ ♔g6 44.♖d7 ♖e8 45.♖xa7 e3 46.♗e1 ♖c8 47.♖e7 ♖xc6 48.♖xe3.

39. a3-a4 ♘g7-e8!
40. a4-a5 ♕f6-b2!

The knight on d6 is defended, so the queen can enter the fray.

41. a5xb6

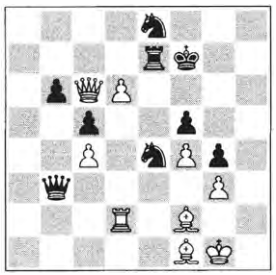


41. ... ♕b2-b3!
42. ♖d1-d2 a7xb6
43. ♗d3-f1

A 'pass move' like 43.♔h2 loses to 43...♕c3 44.♖d1 ♕a5! with 45...♖c7 to follow, trapping the white queen.

43. ... ♘d6-e4
44. d5-d6

Hoping for tactics. After 44.♖e2 ♘8d6 Black has clearly improved his knights.



44. ... ♘e4xd2

Black had a nice win with 44...♘8xd6!! 45.♖xd6 ♕f3 46.♕d5+ ♔g7 47.♗d4+ (or 47.♗e1 ♕e3+) 47...cxd4 48.♕xd4+ ♔h7.

45. ♕c6-d5+

45.dxe7 loses to 45...♕f3! 46.♕xb6 ♕d1.

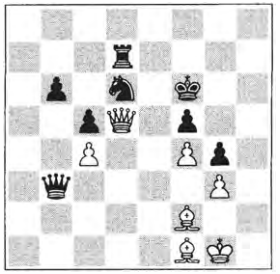
45. ... ♔f7-f6

45...♖e6 46.d7 is not clear: 46...♘f3+ 47.♔g2 ♘c7 48.d8♕ (48.♕xf5+ ♔e7) 48...♘xd5 49.cxd5 and White has tactical chances.

46. ♕d5xd2

46.dxe7 was the best defence, even though Black should win the resulting endgame after 46...♕d1 47.♕e5+ ♔f7 48.♕xf5+ ♔xe7 49.♕h7+ ♔d8 50.♕d3+ ♔c8 51.♕f5+ ♔b8 52.♕e5+ ♔b7 53.♕d5+ ♔a7 54.♕d7+ ♔a6 55.♕b5+ ♔b7 56.♕d7+ ♘c7 57.♕d3 b5! 58.♗e3 (58.cxb5? c4) 58...♕xf1+ 59.♕xf1 ♘xf1 60.♔xf1 bxc4 61.♗xc5 ♔c6.

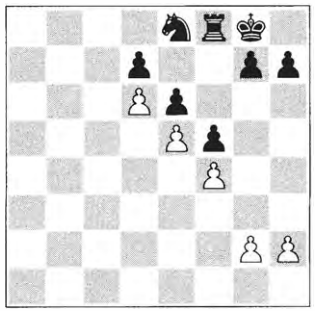
46. ... ♖e7-d7
47. ♕d2-d5 ♘e8xd6



48. ♕d5-e5+ ♔f6-f7
49. ♕e5-d5+ ♔f7-e7
50. ♕d5-e5+ ♔e7-d8
51. ♕e5-h8+ ♔d8-c7
52. ♕h8-a8 ♕b3-b1
53. ♕a8-a7+ ♘d6-b7

And White resigned.

Structure 1.8



Nimzo-Sämisch structure – white pawn chain paralyses the black kingside

In these doubled pawns/full centre positions, Black has to be careful not to allow the white pawns too far. If this happens, then the black kingside could easily be paralysed and cut off from play.
The following game is a good example. I am rather convinced that the modern treatment of one of the topical Nimzo variations stems from this old game by David Bronstein.

NI 19.7 (E24) **GAME 14**
David Bronstein
Vladimir Simagin
Moscow ch-URS 1961 (12)

1.	**c2-c4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**d2-d4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
4.	**a2-a3**	**♗b4xc3+**
5.	**b2xc3**	**c7-c5**
6.	**f2-f3**	

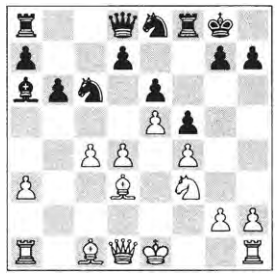
When I said 'modern treatment of this old Bronstein idea', I meant the line 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♗d3 0-0 8.♘e2 b6 9.e4 ♘e8 10.0-0 ♗a6 11.f4 f5 12.d5 ♘a5 13.e5! ♗xc4 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.d6 and due to the fact that Black's kingside is paralysed and cut off from play, White has strong compensation for the pawn, as seen in Milov-J. Polgar, Moscow, FIDE World Championship 2001.

6.	**...**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**e2-e4**	**0-0**
8.	**e4-e5**	**♘f6-e8**
9.	**f3-f4**	**c5xd4**
10.	**c3xd4**	**b7-b6**

Black is very much focused on collecting the c4 pawn, allowing the white pawns to advance. Soon he will realize that with his kingside, i.e. his rook on f8 and his knight on e8, out of play, the extra pawn will not be worth much.

11.	**♘g1-f3**	**♗c8-a6**
12.	**♗f1-d3**	**f7-f5**

The immediate 12...♘a5?? fails to a well-known elementary school tactic: 13.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 14.♘g5+ ♔g6 (or 14...♔g8 15.♕h5) 15.f5+ (15.♕g4 should win as well) 15...exf5 16.g4 and White soon wins.

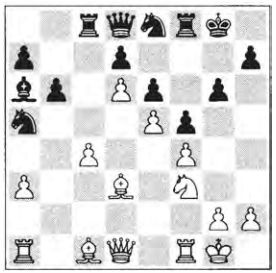


13.	**d4-d5!**	**♘c6-a5**
14.	**d5-d6**	

Like in the above-mentioned game Milov-Polgar, White's advanced pawns paralysing the black kingside are worth far more than a pawn, with the small difference that here White has an even better version because the knight is better placed on f3 than it was on e2 in the other example.

14.	**...**	**♖a8-c8**
15.	**0-0**	**g7-g6**

Black understands the trouble he has got himself into and is no longer in such a hurry to collect the pawn. Putting the e8 knight on g7 (the only available square) and connecting the rooks becomes his chief priority.



16. c4-c5!

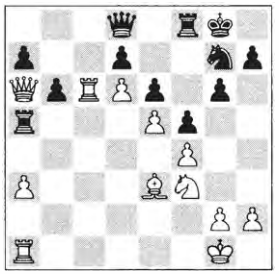
The more pieces White exchanges on the queenside, the more the absence of the e8 knight is going to be felt.

16.	**...**	**♗a6xd3**
17.	**♕d1xd3**	**♖c8xc5**
18.	**♗c1-e3**	**♖c5-d5**
19.	**♕d3-a6**	**♘a5-c6**
20.	**♖f1-c1!**	

White understands that he is not a pawn down, but rather virtually a piece up and so he makes ready to sacrifice material in order to force a breakthrough.

20.	**...**	**♘e8-g7**
21.	**♖c1xc6!**	**♖d5-a5**

The endgame after 21...dxc6 22.♕xa7 ♕a8 23.♕xa8 (not 23.♕xb6 ♖b8 24.♕c7?? ♖b7 and White has blundered his queen: 25.♕xc6 ♖b1+) 23...♖xa8 24.♗xb6 is difficult for Black.



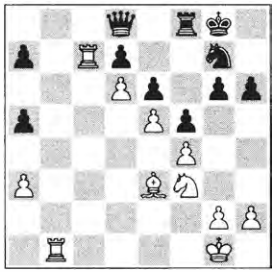
22. ♕a6xa5!

A nice positional queen sacrifice. In the resulting position the white rook will be devastatingly strong on the 7th rank. On top of that, the black knight remains out of play, so it is fair to say that in reality White is the one with the material advantage.

22.	**...**	**b6xa5**
23.	**♖c6-c7**	**h7-h6**

Hoping to push ...g6-g5 and create some sort of counterplay on the kingside.

24. ♖a1-b1



The other rook is ready to enter the 7th rank.

24. ... ♘g7-e8

A sad story. The knight returns to e8, underlining the success of White's strategy. Black is without any kind of counterplay.

25. ♖c7xa7 g6-g5

26. ♗e3-b6 ♕d8-b8

d7 is not the pawn Black likes to give, but 26...♕c8 runs into 27.♗c7 with ♖b8 to follow, and Black will lose his queen.

27. ♖a7xd7

The pawn on d7 is gone and nothing has been solved.

27. ... ♕b8-c8

28. ♖d7-e7 ♕c8-c2

29. ♖b1-f1 ♕c2-c6

30. ♗b6-f2 ♘e8-g7

31. f4xg5!

Now the time has come to collect this pawn.

31. ... h6xg5

32. ♘f3xg5 ♕c6-d5

33. ♘g5-f3 f5-f4

34. ♖e7-c7 ♘g7-f5

The black knight is finally active, but at what price!

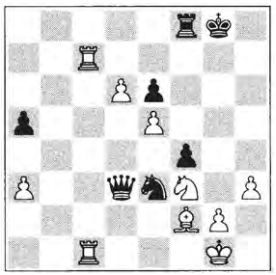
35. ♖f1-b1 ♘f5-e3

36. h2-h3!

Even with the knight on e3 Black does not have enough potential to create serious threats. Furthermore, the black king is soon to become a prime target.

36. ... ♕d5-d3

37. ♖b1-c1



37. ... ♘e3-d5

The attempt to create counterplay with 37...♕g6 does not work after 38.♗xe3 fxe3 39.♖1c4! (it's good that 36.h3! has been played. Playing the other rook – 39.♖7c4 – may offer Black some chances to survive after 39...♕d3 40.♖d4 ♕xa3) 39...♕b1+ (or 39...♕d3 40.♖d4, and the rook ending is lost for Black after 39...♖xf3 40.♖g4 ♕xg4 41.hxg4 e2 42.♖c1) 40.♔h2 e2 41.♖g4+ ♔h8 42.d7 e1♕ 43.♘xe1 ♕xe1 44.♖g5! (the most exact – however, the prosaic 44.♖c8 ♕xe5+ 45.♖g3 ♕d6 46.♖e8 wins as well) 44...♕e3 45.♖c8 ♕f4+ 46.♖g3 ♔h7 47.♖e8 and the d-pawn queens.

38. ♖c7-c6

White is converting his winning advantage systematically and steady-handed.

38. ... ♘d5-e3

39. ♖c6-c3 ♕d3-b5

40. ♗f2xe3 f4xe3

41. ♖c3xe3 ♕b5-b6

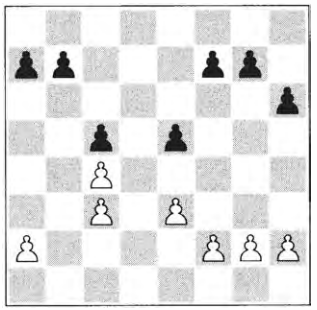
42. ♖c1-c3 ♔g8-g7

43. ♔g1-h2 ♔g7-h6

44. ♖e3-e4 ♕b6-b2

and at the same time Black resigned.

Structure 1.9



Nimzo-Indian structure – White controls open d-file building on his control of d5

One of the strategic plans we do not see that often, but which is nevertheless important in Nimzo-Indian type positions with doubled pawns and a full centre, is playing for the d5-square. White voluntarily exchanges on e5 or c5 and then uses the d5 outpost for his knight or another piece. Taking control of the d-file is often part of the plan. The following game, played seventy years ago by the 6th World Champion, illustrates this very well.

NI 28.2 (E21) **GAME 15**

Mikhail Botvinnik

Vitaly Chekhover

Leningrad ch-URS sf 1938

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4

4. ♘g1-f3 0-0

One of several possible moves here. The other continuations, more frequently seen nowadays, are 4...c5 and 4...b6.

5. ♗c1-g5 d7-d6

5...c5, challenging White in the centre, or 5...d5, transposing to the Ragozin Variation, are better moves here.

6. e2-e3 ♕d8-e7

7. ♗f1-e2 e6-e5

8. ♕d1-c2 ♖f8-e8

9. 0-0 ♗b4xc3

10. b2xc3

White has to recapture with the pawn; after 10.♕xc3? Black has 10...♘e4.

10. ... h7-h6

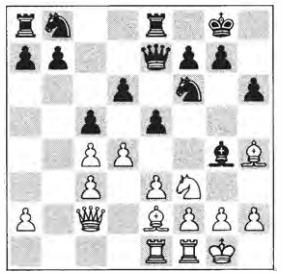
11. ♗g5-h4 c7-c5

12. ♖a1-e1!

Preparing ♘d2 and f2-f4.

12. ... ♗c8-g4

Preventing White from achieving his desired set-up.



13. ♗h4xf6!

A strong and far from obvious strategic decision. White exchanges his well-placed bishop, which was pinning the black knight, in order to take control of the light squares and the h1-a8 diagonal.

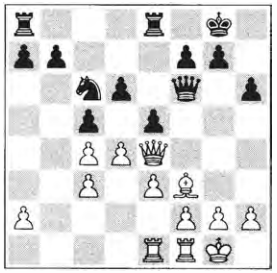
A lot of strong players would not even consider exchanging the beautiful bishop for the stupid knight, which is pinned to boot. This decision shows the deep strategic understanding the 6th World Champion was famous for. The rest of the game, especially the execution phase, is quite impressive.

13. ... ♕e7xf6

14. ♕c2-e4 ♗g4xf3

Black exchanges his bishop in order to finish his development. Keeping the bishop with 14...♗c8 with the idea to develop the knight to c6 and then chase away the white queen with ...♗f5 does not work. White is in time with 15.♘d2! ♘c6 16.f4, with a huge advantage.

15. ♗e2xf3 ♘b8-c6

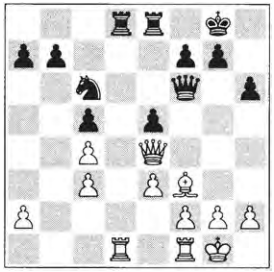


16. d4xc5!

Opening the d-file, though isolating his doubled pawn, is part of the plan started with 13.♗xf6!. Due to his control of the d5-square, White will take control of the file.

16. ... d6xc5

17. ♖e1-d1 ♖a8-d8



18. ♖d1-d5!

White builds on his beautiful outpost.

18. ... b7-b6

The immediate 18...♖xd5 does not solve Black's problems, due to 19.cxd5 ♘e7 20.d6! ♕xd6 21.♕xb7, with a clear advantage, since the white bishop is very much superior to the black knight here.

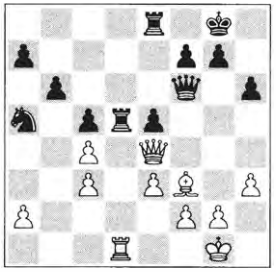
19. ♖f1-d1 ♘c6-a5

Moving away from cxd5 with tempo and thus getting ready to capture on d5.

20. h2-h3!

Improving his position, correctly anticipating the course of events.

20. ... ♖d8xd5



21. ♖d1xd5!

Maintaining control of the d-file, with full domination. Improving his pawn structure with 21.cxd5?, which is in general a good idea, would be a serious strategic mistake here, because it allows a blockade on d6, closing the position, with the black knight soon becoming superior to the white bishop.

21. ... ♕f6-e7

22. ♗f3-g4

The white rook will enter the 7th rank.

22. ... ♕e7-b7

23. ♗g4-f5!

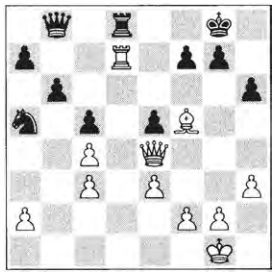
Taking away square h7 from the black king, creating a different mating tactic.

23. ... ♕b7-b8

23...♕a8 was a better defence, though after 24.♕h4 White maintains full domination.

24. ♖d5-d7 ♖e8-d8

Otherwise 25.♕d5.



25. ♕e4xe5!

Making use of the tactical possibilities created with 23.♗f5!.

25. ... ♘a5xc4

26. ♕e5xb8 ♖d8xb8

27. ♗f5-e4!

Excellent execution. Improving the bishop, maintaining domination, is more important than snatching the a7 pawn.

27. ... ♘c4-a3

28. ♗e4-d5 ♖b8-f8

29. e3-e4!

With full control ensured, the pawns can start to roll. This is a very systematically played game. A beautiful learning example.

29. ... a7-a5

30. c3-c4 b6-b5

31. c4xb5 ♘a3xb5

32. e4-e5 a5-a4

33. f2-f4 ♘b5-d4

34. ♔g1-f2 g7-g5

35. g2-g3 g5xf4

36. g3xf4

Black is passive and helpless, unable to stop the advance of the white pawns.

36. ... ♘d4-e6

37. ♔f2-e3 c5-c4

38. f4-f5 ♘e6-c5

39. ♖d7-c7 ♘c5-d3

40. e5-e6 f7xe6

41. f5xe6 ♖f8-e8

42. e6-e7+ ♔g8-g7

43. ♗d5-c6 1-0

In the following, more recent example, White brings his knight to the d5 outpost and after the knight swap recaptures with the pawn. In this case getting a passed pawn on d5 improves White's position.

NI 15.1 (E41) **GAME 16**

Yury Kuzubov

John van der Wiel

Groningen Harmonie 2004 (6)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

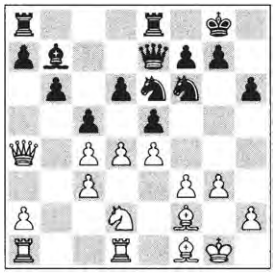
2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4

4. e2-e3

During the process of writing this book I came across a game Wang Yue-Balogh, Taiyuan 2007, where White also executed the strategic plan I am about to explain. That game continued 4.♘f3 b6 5.♗g5 ♗b7 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 ♗xc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9.♘d2 ♘bd7 10.f3 ♕e7 11.♕a4 0-0 12.e4 e5 (so far all stan-

dard theoretical moves) 13.♗d3 (it is obvious that the ideal square for the white knight is e3 and a logical follow up would be ♘f1-e3 and then ♘f5 or ♘d5) 13...♖fe8 14.0-0 (I have never understood why White castles here, instead of continuing his plan with 14.♘f1!. The only drawback is that the white king temporarily stays in the middle. However, I do not see a way for Black to exploit this. If he takes action in the centre with 14...exd4 15.cxd4 c5 16.♘e3! (a standard pawn sacrifice in these positions, shown before in this book. Closing the centre with 16.d5? would allow Black to become unpleasantly active after 16...♕e5! 17.♖d1 ♕c3+ 18.♔f2 ♘e5) 16...cxd4 17.♘f5 ♕e6 18.0-0 ♘c5 19.♕d1 (White has full control, and he will retrieve the pawn with dividends) 19...♘h5 20.♘xd4 ♕e5 21.♗c2 ♘f4 22.♘f5 and White is much better) 14...♘f8 15.♖fd1 ♘g6 16.♗f2 ♘f4 17.♗f1! (the bishop has to be preserved. In case of the direct knight transfer with 17.♘f1, Black becomes active with 17...♘6h5 18.♘e3 ♕g5) 17...c5 18.g3 (kicking back the knight) 18...♘e6



analysis diagram

19.dxe5! (the right positional decision) 19...dxe5 20.♗g2 ♘d8! (Black understands that the white knight will come to d5, where it will have to be exchanged. As a result, White will get a passed pawn on d5, so having the knight ready to jump to d6, blockading that pawn, will come in handy) 21.♘f1! (the knight travels to its destination) 21...♗c6 22.♕c2 ♘b7 23.♘e3 g6 24.♘d5 ♗xd5 25.cxd5 ♘d6 26.a4 and White was better.

4. ... c7-c5
5. ♘g1-f3 d7-d6
6. ♗f1-d3 ♗b4xc3+
7. b2xc3 ♕d8-e7

An unusual move order, and not the best. It is normal to develop a knight to c6 before deciding where to put the queen.

8. ♕d1-c2

With this move White shows that he has already decided on his strategic set-up. Otherwise he would have played 8.0-0 e5 9.♘d2.

8. ... e6-e5

9. d4xe5! d6xe5
10. ♘f3-d2 ♘b8-d7
11. e3-e4!

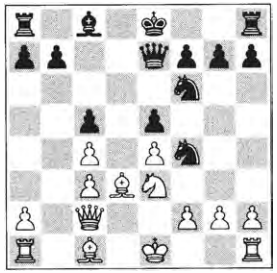
The idea introduced by 8.♕c2 becomes clear. For the time being, with the 9.dxe5 exchange White has defined the pawn situation in the centre, which in general is nothing for Black to complain about in these positions. With the pawn structure defined, moving the knights around is considerably easier than playing with the bishops.

White's strategy is sound because his knight will reach the beautiful outpost on d5. It is rather difficult for Black to tolerate the white knight there, so he will exchange it for one of his knights. White then recaptures with his c4 pawn and gets a passed pawn, while the a1-h8 diagonal will soon be opened for his dark-squared bishop.

11. ... ♘d7-f8
12. ♘d2-f1!

Executing the idea.

12. ... ♘f8-e6
13. ♘f1-e3 ♘e6-f4



14. ♗d3-f1!

The black knight will soon be kicked out with g2-g3.

14. ... h7-h6

Preparing the ...♘h3 jump after 15.g3. In case of the logical 14...0-0, White is clearly better after 15.g3 ♘e6 (15...♘h3?? simply loses a piece after 16.♘f5 ♗xf5 17.exf5 ♘f4 18.gxf4 exf4+ 19.♕e2 ♕d7 20.♗xf4) 16.♘d5.

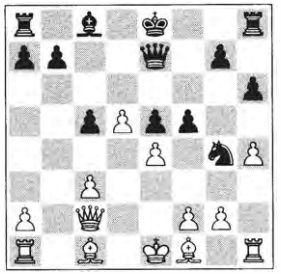
15. h2-h4

Not willing to allow 15.g3 ♘h3, since the position is rather unclear after 16.♘f5 ♗xf5 17.exf5 ♘g5 18.♗g2 e4.

15. ... ♘f6-g4

Otherwise 16.g3 and ♘d5.

16. ♘e3-d5 ♘f4xd5
17. c4xd5 f7-f5



18. ♗f1-b5+!

An important check.

18. ... ♗c8-d7
19. ♗b5xd7+ ♕e7xd7
20. e4xf5!

Making use of the fact that the d5 pawn is temporarily taboo: 20...♕xd5?? 21.♕a4+.

20. ... 0-0
21. f2-f3 ♘g4-f6
22. c3-c4

Now the passed pawn on d5 is defended, while the a1-h8 diagonal is opened for the bishop. Last, but definitely not least, White also happens to be a pawn up.

22. ... e5-e4

Hoping for a tactical solution to the problem.

23. 0-0 ♖a8-e8
24. ♗c1-b2!

This bishop now becomes a monster.

24. ... e4xf3
25. ♖f1xf3 ♘f6-g4
26. ♖f3-f4!

Preparing the lethal blow. The immediate 26.f6? would not be effective due to 26...♕d6! 27.g3 ♘xf6.

26. ... h6-h5?

Black is not alert, allowing for his quick annihilation. However, after retrieving the pawn with 26...♘e3 27.♕d3 ♖xf5 (or 27...♘xf5 28.♖af1 ♘d6 29.♕g6 and the white attack continues, whereas not taking the pawn and fishing for compensation with 27...♕d6 should not work after 28.♖f3 ♘g4 29.g3) 28.♖e4! ♖xe4 29.♕xe4 ♘g4 30.♖e1 h5 31.d6!, White has a winning advantage, since Black has no more than just a few checks: 31...♕xd6 32.♕xf5 ♕h2+ 33.♔f1 ♕h1+ 34.♔e2 ♕xg2+ 35.♔d1 ♕xb2 36.♖e8 mate.

27. f5-f6!

Now it's immediately over.

27. ... g7xf6

27...♘xf6 28.♗xf6 gxf6 29.♕g6+ ♕g7 30.♕xh5 is also lost.

28. ♕c2-g6+ ♕d7-g7
29. ♕g6xh5 ♘g4-e3
30. ♕h5-f3 ♔g8-h7
31. ♔g1-h1?

It is rather difficult to explain why White refrained from the simple 31.♗xf6, winning immediately. Now White slowly creates technical difficulties for himself.

31. ... ♕g7-g6
32. ♖a1-e1?

Much better is 32.h5! with an easy win: 32...♕g5 (or 32...♕c2 33.♗xf6) 33.♗xf6 ♖xf6 34.♖xf6 ♘xg2 35.♖g6.

32. ... ♘e3-g4!

Introducing some tactics, like 33.♖xe8 ♕b1+ 34.♕f1 ♕xf1+ 35.♖xf1 ♖xe8, with chances of salvation. Still, a relatively safe win for White should be 33.♖d1 ♘e3 34.♖d2.

33. ♖e1-f1 f6-f5
34. d5-d6?

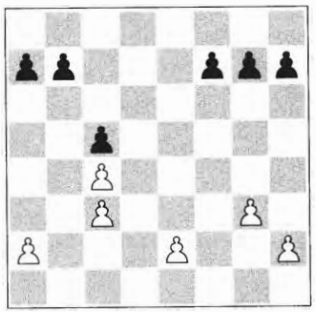
After achieving a totally winning position, White is doing his best to spoil it.

34. ... ♖f8-f7??

The moment he finally gets serious counterchances, Black blunders horribly. After the normal 34...♕xd6 35.♕xb7+ ♖e7 36.♕f3 ♖fe8 Black would have a lot of tactics and be very much back in the game.

35. ♖f4xg4 1-0

Structure 1.10



Nimzo-Indian structure – White combines control of the d- and f-file with the power of his bishops

During the process of writing this book I came across this very recent game and found Topalov's play as impressive as it was instructive.

EO 44.8 (E21) **GAME 17**
Veselin Topalov
Levon Aronian
Morelia/Linares 2008 (1)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-b4
4. ♘g1-f3 c7-c5
5. g2-g3

This variation used to be first Alekhine's and then Romanishin's favourite, but it gained real popularity thanks to Kasparov's efforts in one of his World Championship matches against Karpov.

5. ... c5xd4

Another logical continuation is not to exchange any pawns in the centre and to exert immediate pressure along the a5-e1 diagonal with 5...♘e4 6.♕d3 ♕a5. One of the stem games with that line was the first game of the Kasparov-Karpov World Championship match in 1985. There followed: 7.♕xe4 ♗xc3+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♘xd2

analysis diagram

9...♕b6? (a strange mistake coming from the 12th World Champion. Black is underdeveloped and he should bring his b8 knight into play. By the way, his queen is pinning White's d2 knight and is well placed on a5. Modern theory is still trying to come up with a verdict in the line 9...♘c6 10.dxc5 (or 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♗g2; the original 11.♔d1 is also an option) 10...b6 11.♗g2 ♗b7) 10.dxc5 ♕xb2 11.♖b1 ♕c3 (Black decides, probably correctly, that taking a

pawn with 11...♕xa2 is too dangerous after all)

analysis diagram

12.♕d3!. A nice, instructive concept often seen in such positions and worth remembering. By exchanging the queens on d3, White improves his pawn structure, while keeping all the pressure. In particular the weakness of b7 is annoying for Black, and he has terrible problems to finish his development.

White's advantage is larger than it may seem at first sight. I still remember being amazed (back in 1985!) by the fact that an endgame virtuoso of Karpov's stature went down in this game, not being able to create any counterplay or put up any meaningful resistance to the young Kasparov:

12...♕xd3 13.exd3 ♘a6 14.d4 ♖b8 15.♗g2 ♔e7 16.♔e2 ♖d8 (the attempt to solve the b7 weakness and at the same time exchange the passive c8 bishop would not work; after 16...b6 17.cxb6 axb6 18.♖b3 ♗b7 19.♗xb7 ♖xb7 White exerts pressure on the weak b-pawn and obtains a winning position after 20.♖hb1 ♖hb8 21.c5! b5 22.♘e4 ♘c7 23.a4! b4 24.♘d6 ♖a7 25.♖xb4) 17.♘e4 (another logical way was 17.♖b3 d6 18.cxd6+ ♖xd6 19.♔e3 b6 20.♖a3! with ♖b1 to follow. White has a massive advantage – note the poor coordination of the black pieces) 17...b6 18.♘d6! ♘c7 (in the case of 18...bxc5 White can choose between simply taking an exchange with 19.♘xc8+ ♖dxc8 20.♗b7 or playing for domination with 19.♖xb8 ♘xb8 20.dxc5) 19.♖b4 (White doubles his rooks on the b-file, a simple and powerful plan here) 19...♘e8 20.♘xe8 ♔xe8 21.♖hb1 ♗a6 (desperately trying to create some sort of counterplay in a lost position) 22.♔e3 d5 23.cxd6 ♖bc8 (if 23...♖xd6, 24.c5 decides) 24.♔d3 ♖xd6 25.♖a4! b5 26.cxb5 ♖b8 27.♖ab4 and White soon won.

This game again confirms that when a positional set-up is fundamentally wrong, then even the very best – Karpov in his prime – can lose without firing a single shot.

6. ♘f3xd4 ♘f6-e4

This is one of the main lines of the g3 Nimzo.

7. ♕d1-d3

7. ... ♗b4xc3+

The other frequently played line here is 7...♕a5. For the sake of a better general understanding of this type of position I shall give a few instructive examples of how the play may proceed:

A) 8.♘b3 and now:

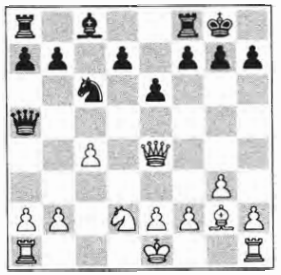
A1) White is better in the case of 8...♕f5 9.♕e3 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♗e7 11.♗g2.

analysis diagram

With pressure along the d-file and on b7, while his doubled c-pawns are controlling a lot of squares. It is important to note that doubled c-pawns are much better than they may seem in these positions.

11...♘a6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖d1 ♕h5 14.♗f3 ♕g6 15.♕d3! f5 (15...♕xd3 16.exd3 would improve White's pawn structure) 16.♗f4 and Black has terrible problems to finish his development: 16...d6 17.♗xd6! ♖d8 18.♗xe7 ♖xd3 19.♖xd3 ♔f7 20.♗a3 and Black's ♖a8 and ♗c8 remain out of play. White soon won in Ljubojevic-Ermenkov, Malta Olympiad 1980;

A2) 8...♘xc3 9.♗d2 (the position is about equal after 9.♘xa5 ♘e4+ 10.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 11.♕xd2 ♘xd2 12.♔xd2 ♘c6 13.♘b3 d6! (better than 13...b6 14.♗g2 ♗a6 (or 14...♗b7 15.c5) 15.♖ac1 ♖c8 16.c5! ♔e7 (not 16...♘e5 17.cxb6 ♘c4+ 18.♖xc4 ♗xc4 19.♗b7! and White wins) 17.♖c3 ♘e5 18.♖hc1 and White was better in Wang Yue-Berg, Gibraltar 2008) 14.♗g2 ♗d7 15.♖hd1 ♔e7) 9...♘e4 10.♕xe4 ♗xd2+ 11.♘xd2 0-0 12.♗g2 ♘c6 and now:



analysis diagram

A21) 13.♕e3 d5 14.0-0 d4 15.♕d3 e5 16.a3 g6 17.b4 ♕c7 18.c5. White has some initiative on the queenside and a small advantage, as in Cvitan-P. Nikolic, Sarajevo 1987;

A22) Putting the white queen on a more active – and more exposed – post with 13.♕f4 gets White in trouble after 13...e5! 14.♕h4 d6 15.a3 ♗e6. White is pinned along the a5-e1 diagonal and has to spend a number of tempi to prepare castling: 16.♖c1 ♖ad8 17.♖c3 d5 18.♘b3 ♕b6 19.cxd5 ♖xd5! and Black was better in Ljubojevic-Velimirovic, Yugoslav Championship, Vrbas 1982.

B) Another, less frequently played move here is 8.♘c2, involving a pawn sacrifice.

analysis diagram

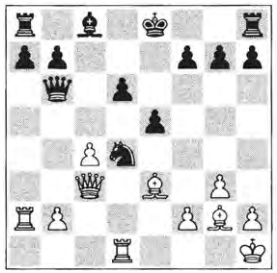
8...♘xc3 (Black takes the pawn, which is a risky decision here. Correct was 8...♗xc3+! 9.bxc3 ♘c5 with approximate equality) 9.♘xb4 ♘xa2 10.♖xa2 ♕xb4+ 11.♗d2 ♕b6 12.♗g2 (with a bishop pair and well-coordinated pieces in an open position, White has ample compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 12...♘c6 (it was better to bring the king into safety with 12...0-0 and, in case of 13.b4, try to complete development with 13...d6 14.0-0 ♘c6) 13.♕a3 (keeping the black king in the middle) 13...♘d4.

Now White has to build on his initiative and he correctly offers another pawn: 14.0-0!.

analysis diagram

B1) 14...d6?! 15.e3 ♘b3 16.♗c3 0-0 17.♖d1 (due to the terrible weakness of d6 Black is lost here) 17...♘c5 (17...♖d8 loses to 18.c5!) 18.b4 ♘d7 19.♖ad2 and White had a massive advantage and soon won in Beliavsky-Alburt, Soviet Championship, Leningrad 1974;

B2) It was better for Black to be consistent and snatch another pawn with 14...♘xe2+ 15.♔h1 ♘d4 (it is obvious that White has enough compensation, but it's not easy to find more) 16.♗e3 e5 17.♖d1 d6 18.♕c3



analysis diagram

18...♕c7! (an important move; 18...0-0? loses to 19.♖xd4! exd4 20.♗xd4 ♕c7 21.♗xg7) and now:

B21) The exchange sacrifice could still be tried, but the consequences are no longer clear: 19.♖xd4 exd4 20.♗xd4 ♗e6! 21.b3 f6 22.♖e2 ♔f7 and in order to keep the initiative, White probably has to sacrifice another exchange: 23.♖xe6! ♔xe6 24.♗d5+ ♔e7 25.♕f3. In this sharp position White should have enough compensation for his double exchange sacrifice, but probably not more.

Other moves are not sufficient: 23.♕f3 ♖he8 24.♕h5+ ♔g8 25.♗e4 h6 26.♕g6 ♔f8; or 23.♗e4 ♕d7! 24.♕f3 ♗g4 25.♗d5+ ♔f8 26.♕f4 ♗xe2 27.♗xf6 ♗h5! and Black wins.

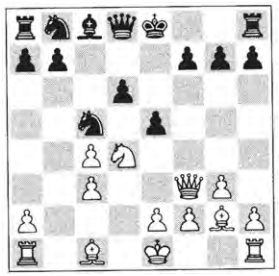
B22) 19.♗xd4 exd4 20.♕xd4 0-0 21.b3 ♖e8! and Black should be able to hold: 22.♖xa7 ♖xa7 23.♕xa7 ♕c5;

B3) 14...♕b3?! is not good: 15.♕xb3 ♘xb3 16.♗c3 and now 16...f6?? blunders a piece: 17.♖a3 ♘c5 18.b4.

8. b2xc3 ♘e4-c5
9. ♕d3-f3

A position similar to the one in Ljubojevic-Ermenkov has been reached. White has pressure and the potential weakness of his doubled c-pawns is of no importance for the time being.

9. ... d7-d6
10. ♗f1-g2 e6-e5

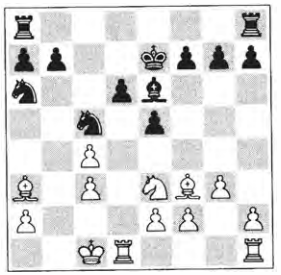


11. ♕f3-e3!?

A fresh Topalov idea, trying to improve on two other logical moves.

A) 11.♘f5 is one; after 11...♕f6 12.♘e3 ♕xf3 there can follow:

A1) 13.♗xf3 ♗e6 14.♗a3 ♘ba6 15.0-0-0 ♔e7

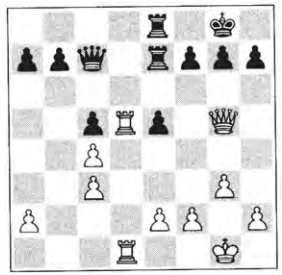


analysis diagram

16.♗g2! (preparing a well-known plan to increase the pressure on Black's position) 16...♖ad8 17.f4 f6 18.♖hf1 b6 19.g4 ♘c7 20.h4 and White had an initiative in Kramnik-Anand, Monaco blind 2007;

A2) Another interesting idea is 13.exf3!? – the reader should note that due to the good control of central squares and his pressure along the d-file White is in most of these lines not afraid to allow a doubling of his pawns: 13...♘ba6 14.♗a3 ♗e6 15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16.f4 exf4 (the immediate 16...f5!, achieving a similar aim but not allowing g-file pressure, looks like a better move) 17.gxf4 f5 18.h4 ♖he8 19.h5 ♔c7 20.♖hg1 and due to his pressure along the d- and g-files and good control of the d5-square, White had an advantage in Ivanchuk-Asrian, Sochi 2007.

B) Aronian also has experience on the white side of this line and he has tried 11.♘b3 ♘ba6 12.♗a3 ♕c7 13.♖d1 ♗e6 14.♘xc5 ♘xc5 15.♗xc5 dxc5 (later on black players realized that creating a pawn structure similar to Game 15 (Botvinnik-Chekhover) is not advisable and improved with 15...♕xc5! 16.♕xb7 ♖c8 17.♗d5 ♗xd5 18.♕xd5 ♕xc4 with equality, Moiseenko-Gyimesi, Maalot 2008) 16.0-0! (refraining from 16.♕xb7 ♕xb7 17.♗xb7 ♖b8 18.♗d5 ♔e7 19.f4 ♖b2, after which a draw would be a likely outcome) 16...♖b8 17.♕h5! (an important move, achieving the strategic objective to build on his control of the d5-square) 17...0-0 (17...♗xc4? is bad due to 18.♕g4) 18.♗d5 ♖fe8 19.♗xe6 ♖xe6 20.♖d5 ♖e7 21.♖fd1 ♖be8 22.♕g5.



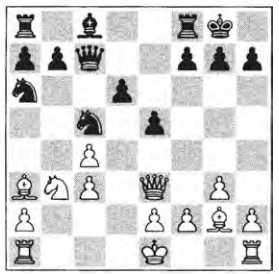
analysis diagram

White has d-file control and a dominant piece (this time his rook) excellently placed on the d5-square. Due to these two assets he had a long-term advantage and went on to win in Aronian-P.H.Nielsen, Turin Olympiad 2006.

11. ... 0-0

12. ♘d4-b3 ♕d8-c7

Not an easy moment for Black. The text allows Topalov to create the aforementioned favourable pawn structure (see Botvinnik-Chekhover or Aronian-Nielsen). The other way to reach a similar pawn structure, but in a slightly different version, was 12...♘ba6, and now after 13.♗a3 ♕c7 White has a few logical plans at his disposal:



analysis diagram

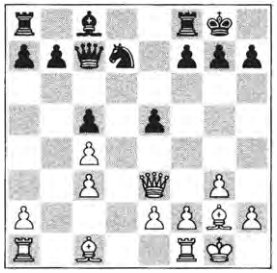
A) 14.f4 ♖e8 15.0-0 ♗f5 16.♖ad1 and White has pressure here;

B) A slightly different version with 14.0-0 ♗e6 15.f4 f6 looks OK for Black;

C) After the well-known plan 14.♗xc5 ♘xc5 15.♘xc5 dxc5 (due to his d-file control and strong bishop White is better in the case of 15...♕xc5 16.♕xc5 dxc5 17.0-0-0! f5 18.♗d5+ ♔h8 19.f4) 16.♗d5 (wrong is 16.0-0? ♗e6 17.♖ab1 ♖ab8 and White has missed his chance to obtain a dominant piece on the d5 outpost) and White tries to build on his d5-square dominance, like in Aronian-Nielsen; 16...♗h3 (trying to prevent White from castling) 17.f3 and this looks better for White.

13. ♘b3xc5 d6xc5

14. 0-0 ♘b8-d7



15. f2-f4!

Well played. Immediate action is needed, so White opens up the position in order to activate his dark-squared bishop as well. The stereotypical 15.♖d1 does not promise anything, since Black gets a good game after 15...♖b8 with ...b6 or ...♘f6 to follow.

15. ... e5xf4

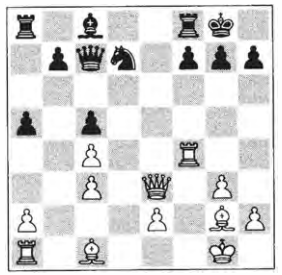
Trying to keep the position relatively closed with 15...♘b6 would not help. White is better after 16.f5! ♘xc4 (or 16...f6? 17.♗a3) 17.♕e4 ♘d6 (17...♘b6? 18.f6 gives White a crushing attack) 18.♕xe5 ♖e8 19.♕d5.

16. ♖f1xf4

Black has terrible trouble developing his queenside, something he will not manage to solve throughout the game.

16. ... a7-a5

Black is trying to bring the a8 rook into play and thus solve his queenside development problems. 16...♘e5 looks logical, but does not help after 17.♗a3 ♘g6 18.♖ff1 ♗e6 19.♕xc5 ♖fc8 20.♕xc7 ♖xc7 21.♗d6 ♖xc4 22.♗xb7 ♖d8 23.♗b4 and White is a sound pawn up.



17. ♕e3-e7!!

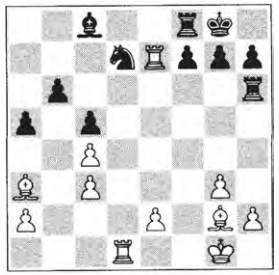
Domination. White has the initiative, but he has to play with a lot of power and precision. Black needs just a small break in order to develop his queenside and then White's seemingly strong initiative may evaporate. Topalov's plan is by far the best and the most exact, although in my opinion White also had another way to get an advantage: 17.♗a3 ♖a6 and now:

A) Not convincing is 18.♖e4.

A1) Now 18...♕d6 is not good due to 19.♖f1 ♕h6 and now:

A11) 20.♕xh6 ♖xh6 21.♖e7 b6 and now:

A111) It is never too late to get into trouble – even with a logical move: 22.♖d1?



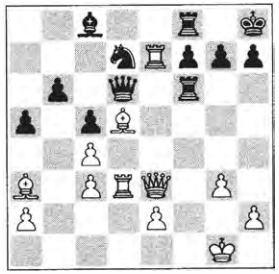
analysis diagram

22...♖e6!! 23.♖dxd7 (23.♖xe6 fxe6 24.♖d6 ♘e5) 23...♗xd7 24.♖xd7 ♖xe2 and Black takes on a2, pins White on the first rank and will push his own passed a-pawn very fast;

A112) 22.♗d5 ♘f6 23.♗c1 ♘xd5 24.cxd5 ♖d6 25.e4 f6 26.♗e3 ♖d7 27.♖xd7 ♗xd7 28.♖b1 b5 29.♗xc5 ♖e8 30.♖e1 ♗f5 31.d6 ♔f7 and Black should survive.

A12) 20.♗xc5! (this simple and direct move promises more than line A11) 20...♘xc5 21.♕xc5 ♕b6 22.♕d4 ♗e6 23.c5.

A2) 18...♖f6! 19.♖e7 ♕d6 20.♗d5 b6! (neutralizing the a3 bishop) 21.♖d1 ♔h8 22.♖d3



analysis diagram

22...♖e6! 23.♖xe6 fxe6 24.♗xe6 ♕e7 (Black's pieces are coordinating well, while White's pawn structure deficiencies are starting to be felt) 25.♗xd7 ♕xe3+ 26.♖xe3 ♗xd7 and the position is about equal.

B) 18.♗d5! ♖f6! 19.♖af1 (Black holds in the case of 19.♖e4 ♕d6 20.♖d1 ♔h8 21.♖d2 (or 21.♗c1 ♘b6 22.♖e8 ♗d7 23.♖xf8+ ♕xf8) 21...♕b6! 22.♖b2 ♕d6 23.♖d2 ♕b6) 19...♕d8 20.♗xc5 ♖e8 21.♕f2 ♘xc5 22.♕xc5 ♖xf4 (a blunder is 22...♖xe2?? due to the simple

23.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 24.♕h5+) 23.♖xf4 ♗e6. Black is a pawn down, but due to White's damaged pawn structure White's chances to win or Black's to draw should be estimated at about 50-50.

It should be noted that these positions are considerably more difficult to play than they may seem. Playing over the board one often gets the impression that various moves should be good enough to maintain the initiative. However, due to the potential pawn structure problems and the fact that very often one wrong piece swap may cause White's initiative to evaporate entirely, playing those positions with white requires energy and precision.

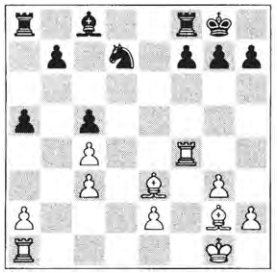
17. ... ♕c7-e5

Black has to exchange queens, since 17...♖a6?? loses to 18.♗d5+−.

18. ♕e7xe5 ♘d7xe5

19. ♗c1-e3 ♘e5-d7

The 'active' attempt 19...g5 simply loses a pawn to 20.♖e4 f6 21.♗xc5.



20. ♖f4-e4!

The rook gets to the seventh rank, fully dominating events.

20. ... ♖a8-a6

20...♖d8 loses to 21.♖d1 ♖a6 22.♗xc5.

21. ♖a1-b1! ♖a6-g6

21...♖d6 loses to 22.♗f4 ♖g6 (or 22...♖b6 23.♖xb6 ♘xb6 24.♗d6+−) 23.♖e7, while in the case of 21...♖d8 22.♖d1! still works, for instance: 22...♖f8 23.♖e7 ♖e6 24.♖xe6 fxe6 25.♗xb7 ♗xb7 26.♖xd7 ♗a6 27.♗xc5 ♖f5 28.♖c7 ♗xc4 29.♗d4 ♗xe2 30.♖xg7+ ♔f8 31.♖xh7.

22. ♖e4-e7 b7-b6

23. ♗e3-f4

Even though the queens have been swapped and there is relatively limited material left on the board, Black is still completely paralysed and his pieces lack coordination.

23. ... h7-h5

24. ♗g2-e4

24.♗d5 ♘f6 25.e4 h4 26.♗c7 hxg3 27.hxg3 also looks winning.

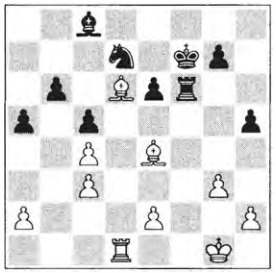
24. ... ♖g6-e6

25. ♖e7xe6 f7xe6

26. ♗f4-d6! ♖f8-f6

27. ♖b1-d1 ♔g8-f7

27...e5?? blunders an exchange after 28.♗e7.

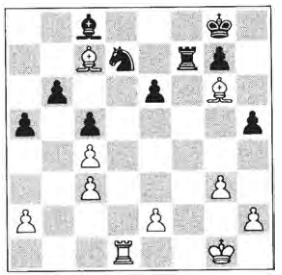


28. ♗d6-f4! ♔f7-g8

29. ♗f4-c7 ♖f6-f7?

This blunders an exchange. 29...e5 was a better defence, though after 30.♗d8! ♖f8 31.♗d5+ ♔h7 32.♗c7 ♖f6 33.h4 Black remains completely tied up.

30. ♗e4-g6!



30. ... a5-a4

30...♖f8 loses an exchange after 31.♗d6 ♖f6 32.♗e8! ♖f5 33.♗e7 ♘f8 34.♖d8 ♗b7 35.♗g6.

31. ♗g6xh5

Black is so helpless that White is not even in a hurry to take the exchange. This looks like a good moment for Black to resign, For some reason, Aronian plays a few more useless moves.

31. ... ♘d7-f6

32. ♗h5xf7+ ♔g8xf7

33. ♗c7xb6 ♗c8-a6

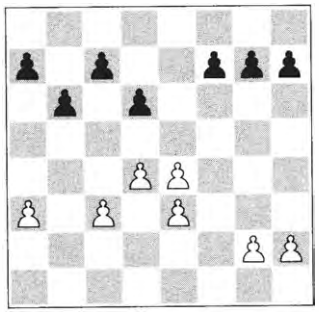
34. ♗b6xc5 e6-e5

35. a2-a3 ♗a6xc4

36. ♗c5-b4 e5-e4

37. ♔g1-f1 1-0

Structure 1.11



Nimzo structure – White has an open file and a doubled e-pawn

In the following game White executes a beautiful positional sacrifice. I have to admit that I have played this type of position with white in a number of games, and never thought of this kind of sacrifice at all.

White sacrifices the exchange in order to achieve harmonious development and a long-term initiative, based on his powerful centre and strong light-squared bishop on a2, which will become a monster. The open f-file and the pressure on f7 perfectly fit in this strategy. Once made, the sacrifice looks very logical. However, it is far from easy to think up over the board (former World Champion Spassky did not find it either) and very useful to remember, because it can definitely be used as a standard sacrifice in this type of position.

NI 18.10 (E28) **GAME 18**

Gregory Kaidanov
Alexander Onischuk
Chicago 2002 (7)

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
4.	**e2-e3**	**0-0**
5.	**a2-a3**	**♗b4xc3+**
6.	**b2xc3**	**d7-d6**

A sideline with a different concept compared to the standard 6...c5.

7.	**♘g1-e2**	**e6-e5**
8.	**♘e2-g3**	**♖f8-e8**
9.	**♗f1-d3**	**e5-e4**
10.	**♗d3-b1**	**b7-b6**
11.	**f2-f3**	**♗c8-a6**

Now Black's concept becomes clear. White has built a strong pawn centre and will have an open f-file, while Black gets a strong bishop on c4 which disturbs White's development, controlling the f1-square and preventing kingside castling for White.

12.	**f3xe4**	**♗a6xc4**
13.	**♕d1-f3**	**♘b8-d7**

14. ♖a1-a2!!

In order to exert pressure along the f-file, White needs a rook there and this is a beautiful solution to the problem. If Black takes the exchange, White will get a monster bishop and will be able to castle as well, achieving harmonious development. Should Black decide to ignore the white rook (which was probably a better option), then White transfers his rook from a2 to f2, exerting pressure along the f-file.

The above-mentioned game by Spassky continued in a rather original way: 14.a4 ♕c8 15.♔d2!? (looking for an original solution to the problem. It is interesting that a player of Spassky's calibre and talent failed to find 14.♖a2!!, even though he was obviously looking for original solutions) 15...♕a6 16.h4 ♖ad8 17.h5 h6 18.♖h4 (solving the ♖h1 problem; however, ♖a1, ♗b1 and ♗c1 remain out of play) 18...♘h7 19.♗c2 ♘g5 20.♕f2 ♖e6 21.♖g4 ♖de8 22.♗a3 ♘f6 23.♖xg5 (a forced sacrifice) 23...hxg5 24.♕f5 c5? (it is rather difficult to imagine why Black refrained from 24...♕a5, simply defending the pawn, with a clear advantage) 25.♕xg5 (now White gets an attack) 25...cxd4 (better was 25...♘h7, organizing his defences. This probably leads to a draw after 26.♕g4 ♘f6 (26...♔h8 can be dangerous for Black since White gets an attack after 27.♘f5 g6 28.hxg6 fxg6 29.♖h1!) 27.♕g5 ♘h7) 26.♘f5! dxe3+ (the correct defence consists of 26...dxc3+! 27.♔e1 (27.♔c1? ♘xh5 28.♕xh5 ♗d3!−+ since there is no 29.♔b2!; 27.♔xc3? ♕a5+ 28.♗b4 ♘xe4+ 29.♗xe4 ♕e5+ 30.♔xc4 ♕xa1 31.♗d5 ♖e4+ 32.♗xe4 ♖xe4+ 33.♘d4 ♖e5∓) 27...♘xh5 28.♕xh5 g6! 29.♕g5 ♗f1! 30.♘d4 ♖e5 31.♕f6 ♗d3 32.♔f2 ♖h5 33.♗b3 ♗c4 34.♗b4! ♗xb3 35.♗xc3 ♕d3 36.♘e6! (36.♘xb3 is a draw after 36...♖f5+! 37.exf5 ♕xe3+ 38.♔f1 ♕f4+ 39.♔g1 ♕e3+ 40.♔h2 ♕h6+ with perpetual check) 36...♕xc3! (36...♖h7 37.♖h1!) 37.♕xc3 ♗xe6 38.♕c7 ♖a5 39.♕xd6 and due to the weak dark squares around the black king, White has attacking potential and is clearly better) 27.♔c1! ♘xh5 (the only way to prevent mate) 28.♕xh5 ♗d3 29.♔b2! and White soon won in the attack, Spassky-Uusi, Rostov 1958.

14. ... ♗c4xa2?!

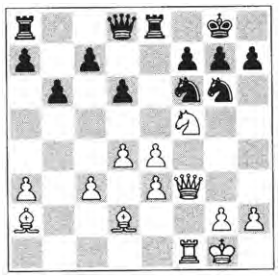
This gives White easy play. Ignoring the rook and keeping the strong bishop with 14...c5 was better.

15.	**♗b1xa2**	**♘d7-f8**
16.	**0-0**	**♘f8-g6**
17.	**♗c1-d2**	

Despite being an exchange up, Black is completely tied up and forced to wage a passive defence.

17.	**...**	**♕d8-d7**
18.	**♘g3-f5!**	**♕d7-d8?!**

Black hangs on to his material, though it was probably better to give back the exchange with 18...♖xe4! 19.♘xg7 ♘f4! (the only move) 20.♗b1 d5 21.exf4 ♔xg7 22.f5 ♖g8.



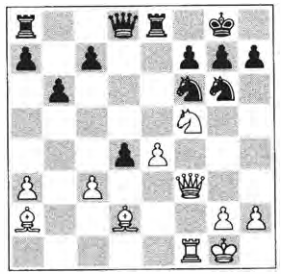
19. e4-e5!!

With this nice pawn sacrifice White activates his d2 bishop. It is quite possible that Black thought White had no better moves than retreating with 19.♘g3.

19.	**...**	**d6xe5**
20.	**e3-e4**	

Now the d2 bishop has an open field. White is attacking with all his pieces.

20. ... e5xd4



21.	**♘f5xg7!**	**♘g6-e5**

The best defence. 21...♔xg7? would lose quickly to 22.♗g5.

22. ♕f3-h3!

22.♕g3? allows 22...♘xe4 with tempo.

22. ... d4xc3

Now, in the event of 22...♘xe4, White gets a winning attack after 23.♘xe8 ♕xe8 24.♗h6.

23.	**♗d2xc3**	**♔g8xg7**
24.	**♕h3-g3+**	

The power of the bishops. Black is pinned all over and completely lost.

24.	**...**	**♘e5-g6**
25.	**♗c3xf6+**	

It was not necessary to hurry with taking on f6. The knight on f6 cannot run away, so 25.h4! was better, winning easily. Compared to the game White would be more or less a tempo up.

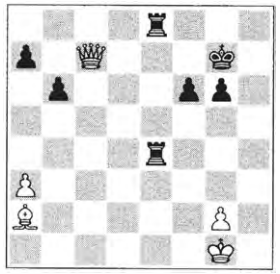
25.	**...**	**♕d8xf6**
26.	**♖f1xf6**	**♔g7xf6**
27.	**h2-h4!**	**♖e8-e5**
28.	**♕g3-f3+**	**♔f6-g7**
29.	**h4-h5**	

Black is forced to give his knight.

29.	**...**	**f7-f6**
30.	**h5xg6**	**h7xg6**
31.	**♕f3-d3**	**♖a8-e8**

Trying to build a fortress.

32. ♕d3-c4 ♖e5-e7
33. ♕c4-c6 ♖e7xe4
34. ♕c6xc7+



34. ... ♖e8-e7

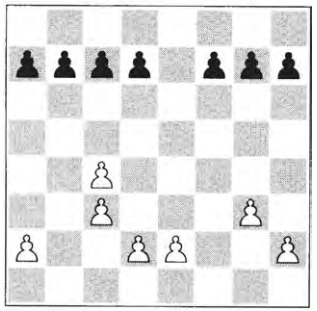
Black has a difficult position because the g6 pawn is also weak. It could be, however, that 34...♖4e7 was a better try.

35. ♕c7-b8 ♔g7-h6
36. ♕b8-f8+ ♔h6-g5
37. ♗a2-f7

The g6 weakness decides.

37. ... ♖e7-c7
38. ♕f8-g7 ♖c7-c1+
39. ♔g1-f2 ♖c1-c2+
40. ♔f2-f3 ♖e4-f4+
41. ♔f3-e3 1-0

Structure 1.12



English Opening structure – White has a doubled c-pawn and an open f-file

White can easily get into trouble when he overestimates the dynamic possibilities associated with his pawn centre. Very often when it turns out that there is not enough compensation for the sacrificed c4 pawn (this is mostly the pawn that falls), White is left with a ruined position and loses without a real fight.

Since giving a pawn for dynamics based on a strong pawn centre is by definition an intuitive sacrifice, this is a tricky business and even the very best often get lost in the treacherous waters. Here is one good example.

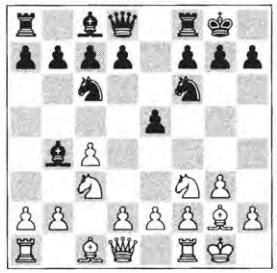
EO 1.10 (A29) **GAME 19**

Garry Kasparov
Vasily Ivanchuk

Moscow ch-URS 1988 (2)

1. c2-c4 ♘g8-f6
2. ♘b1-c3 e7-e5
3. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
4. g2-g3 ♗f8-b4
5. ♗f1-g2 0-0
6. 0-0

This variation of the English Opening was one of Kasparov's main weapons in his 1987 World Championship match with Karpov, and has later remained one of his favourite lines. In this line Black takes on c3, creating doubled c-pawns for White. However, White usually gets central domination. Moreover, his doubled pawns control central squares and are not easy for Black to target.

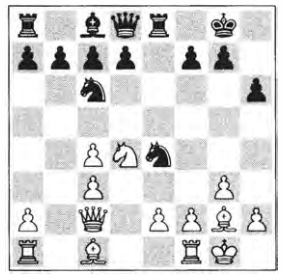


6. ... e5-e4

Another logical possibility for Black which is often tried here is 6...♖e8 7.d3 ♗xc3 8.bxc3 e4. Play may continue as follows:

A) Less convincing is 9.dxe4 ♘xe4 10.♕c2 d6 11.♘d4 ♕e7 12.♖d1 ♗d7 13.f3 ♘c5 14.e4 and White's central pawns become vulnerable: 14...♘a5 15.♕e2 f5! (creating an extra white weakness on e4) 16.♗a3 fxe4 17.fxe4 ♖ad8 with a better game for Black in Kasparov-Anand, Geneva rapid 1996;

B) 9.♘d4 h6 10.dxe4 ♘xe4 11.♕c2.



analysis diagram

Note the pros and cons of White's doubled c-pawn here: on the one hand, they control central squares and help White to build up central domination, while on the other hand, the c4 pawn can become a very easy target.

A) 11...♘c5? is wrong due to 12.♗a3 and Black cannot develop; while 11...♕e7!?, trying to follow the same idea as in Kasparov-Anand, is perhaps an improvement for Black here, since after 12.♘b5 d6 13.♘xc7 ♕xc7 14.♗xe4 ♘e5 he gets his pawn back and has a good game.

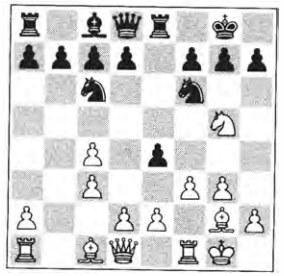
B) 11...d5 (Black opts for quick development and therefore allows White to get rid of his weak c4 pawn) 12.cxd5 ♕xd5 13.e3 ♘a5 14.f3 ♘d6 15.e4 ♕c5 16.♗e3 ♘dc4 17.♗f2 and due to his bishop pair and central domination, White was better in the 16th World Championship match game Kasparov-Karpov, Sevilla 1987.

7. ♘f3-g5 ♗b4xc3
8. b2xc3 ♖f8-e8

White now has to eliminate Black's e4 pawn in order to take control of the centre. Then the doubled c-pawns will

actually be quite useful for White in many lines.

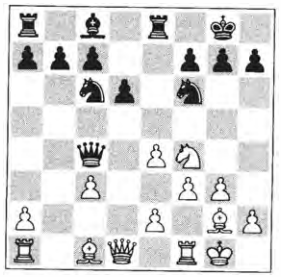
9. f2-f3



9. ... e4xf3

The alternative is to keep the f-file closed and create a slightly strange pawn structure with doubled white e-pawns with 9...e3 10.dxe3 (another logical solution is to keep the white pawn structure intact with 10.d3. In that case, however, White will remain slightly behind in development and Black will open the position with 10...d5, with sharp play and mutual chances, for example: 11.♕b3 ♘a5 12.♕a3 c6 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♖b1 ♕c7 (15...♗g4!? deserves attention) 16.♗b2 ♗g4 17.c4!? (looking for a tactical solution; other options were 17.♘f3 or 17.♖fe1) 17...dxc4 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♘e4 ♔g7, as seen in Kasparov-Karpov, 2nd match game, Sevilla 1987.)

I assume that Kasparov had analysed deeply and come to the conclusion that the creation of a slightly strange pawn structure (after 10.dxe3) would actually be quite favourable for White. As we will see, Black will indeed find it difficult to fight the advance of the white pawn: 10...♕e7 11.♘h3 ♕c5 and Black gets his pawn back, but he cannot find counterplay against the advance of the white pawn: 12.♘f4 ♕xc4 13.e4 d6 (White gets good compensation for the pawn in the case of 13...♕xc3 14.♖b1 d6 15.♗b2 ♕c5+ 16.♔h1)



analysis diagram

A) 14.♕d3 ♘e5 15.♕xc4 ♘xc4 16.g4! ♖b8 17.♖d1 b6 18.g5 ♘d7 19.♘d5 ♖b7 20.f4 and White was better, though Black eventually managed to hold in Kasparov-Sadvakasov, Astana 2000.

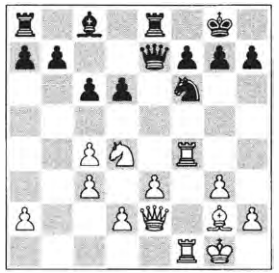
This is definitely a safe way to achieve an advantage. However, I think that White would get more out of his initiative with queens on the board, taking a more aggressive approach:

B) 14.♔h1!? ♘e5 (or 14...♕xc3 15.♖b1) and now 15.g4! should be considered. Black has to take the pawn on c3 now (otherwise White will continue undisturbed), after which White gets a very strong attack. One of the lines illustrating White's attacking potential goes: 15...♕xc3 16.♗d2 ♕c5 17.g5 ♘fd7 18.♘d5 ♘b6 19.♖c1 ♘ec4 20.♗b4 ♕c6 21.♕d4 ♕d7 22.♖xc4 c5 23.♗xc5! ♘xc4 24.♗b4 ♘b6 25.♗c3 f5 26.gxf6 ♘xd5 27.♕xd5+ ♕e6 28.♕d2 and White wins: 28...g6 29.f4 ♕f7 30.f5 ♗d7 31.♖g1 etc.

10. ♘g5xf3 d7-d5

Black has a temporary advantage in development and decides, probably correctly, to open up the position. It would be a mistake for Black to stick to a 'regular' strategy, keeping White's doubled pawn on c4 and, in general, trying to play closed-type positions. White has the open f-file, his pawns in the centre (c3, c4, d2, e2) ensure central domination and prevent Black from getting any counterplay, while the doubled c-pawns are actually quite useful here.

Even a player of Anatoly Karpov's stature – and in his prime – misjudged the domination White achieves, associated primarily with his central pawn structure, and he lost an important game without getting the slightest chance of counterplay. This highly instructive game continued: 10...♕e7 11.e3 ♘e5 12.♘d4 ♘d3 (taking a pawn with 12...♘xc4 is not advisable, since White gets a strong attack after 13.e4 d6 14.d3 c5 15.♘c2, with 16.♗g5 to follow) 13.♕e2 ♘xc1 14.♖axc1 d6 15.♖f4 c6 16.♖cf1.

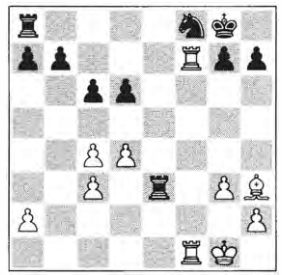


analysis diagram

Take note of White's excellent pawn structure (c3, c4, d2, e3), his dominant knight on d4, and his f-file pressure, while Black does not have any ideas for counterplay. Also, again, the doubled c-pawns are very useful for White here.

A) If 16...♗e6, White can decide that the time is ripe to go in for the kill with 17.♖xf6 gxf6 18.♗e4 ♕f8 (if 18...♗xc4?, 19.♗xh7+! mates) 19.♕h5 ♕g7 20.♖f4;

B) 16...♕e5 17.♕d3 ♗d7 (probably a better defence was 17...♖f8) 18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.♖xf5 ♕e6 20.♕d4 ♖e7 21.♕h4 (also good for White was 21.♖xf6 gxf6 22.♖xf6 ♕e5 23.♖xd6 ♕xd4 24.cxd4 and again, the excellent central pawn formation c4, d2, d4, e3 secures domination for White) 21...♘d7 22.♗h3! (now Black will be forced to give his f7 pawn and allow the white rooks to enter) 22...♘f8 23.♖5f3 ♕e5 24.d4 ♕e4 25.♕xe4 ♖xe4 26.♖xf7 ♖xe3

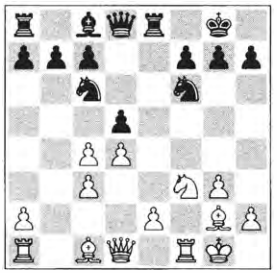


analysis diagram

27.d5 (White also wins with 27.♖xb7 ♖xc3 28.♖c7! (not clear is 28.♖ff7? ♖xc4 29.♖xg7+ ♔h8) 28...♖d3 (28...♖xc4 loses a piece after 29.♖cf7! with 30.♖f8 and 31.♗e6 to follow) 29.♖xc6 ♖xd4 30.♗g2 – the bishop gets transferred to d5 and the black position will collapse) 27...♖ae8 (or 27...cxd5 28.♗g2!) 28.♖xb7 (28.c5! dxc5 29.d6 wins more quickly) 28...cxd5 29.cxd5 and White soon won in Kasparov-Karpov, 4th match game, Sevilla 1987.

11. d2-d4!

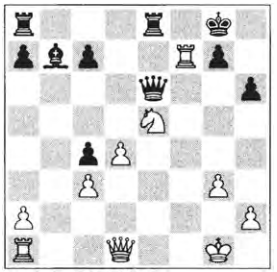
Correctly judging that the ensuing complications will be in White's favour. Black would have achieved his strategic aim after 11.cxd5 ♕xd5 12.♘d4 ♕h5 and Black takes the initiative.



11. ... ♘f6-e4

One of two logical replies. The other was 11...dxc4. The problem for Black is that White then pins the black knight with 12.♗g5 and after 12...h6 (if 12...♕d6, 13.♘d2! with a strong initiative; on the other hand, 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.♘e5 is not clear here because Black has 14...♕h6!) 13.♗xf6 ♕xf6 14.♘e5 and now:

A) If 14...♕e6, White gets a better endgame after some sharp complications: 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♖xf7 c5 17.e3 cxd4 18.exd4 ♗b7

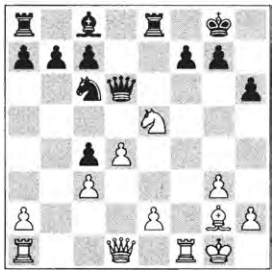


analysis diagram

19.♕b1! ♗e4 (if 19...♗d5, 20.♖xc7; while 19...♕d5?? is a horrible blunder due to 20.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 21.♕g6+) 20.♕xe4 ♕xf7 21.♕xa8 ♖xa8 22.♘xf7 ♔xf7 23.♖b1 ♔e6 24.♖b5 ♔d6 25.a4 and due to his dominant rook, White is better.

The more positional 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.e4 does not promise an advantage, for example: 16...♖b8 17.♕h5 (if 17.♖f2, Black secures counterplay with 17...c5) 17...♖b2 18.♖f4 and White should have compensation, but not more.

B) 14...♕d6, and now White has two acceptable continuations, but no clear road to an advantage:



analysis diagram

B1) 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.e4 ♗e6 17.♕a4 ♕d7 (17...f6? is a blunder due to 18.e5 fxe5 19.♗xc6) 18.♖ab1 with compensation for the pawn, but probably not more.

B2) 15.♘xf7 ♕e7 16.♕c2! ♗e6 17.♗xc6 bxc6 18.♘e5. The dominant white knight compensates for the light-square weaknesses related to the absence of White's bishop, but the position remains sharp.

It could well be that 11...dxc4 is the way to improve on the game, since after the text White quickly gets a very

strong initiative. It is quite possible that Black had underestimated, or missed, White's 14th move.

12. ♕d1-c2!

Putting further pressure on the central squares.

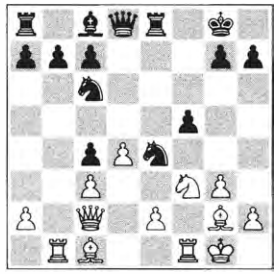
12. ... d5xc4

13. ♖a1-b1!

Continuing to develop calmly. 13.♘e5 does not get White anywhere after 13...♘xe5 14.♕xe4 ♘g6 15.♕d5 ♕e7.

13. ... f7-f5

If 13...f6, then 14.♘e5! fxe5 15.♗xe4.



It may seem that Black has secured control of the light squares and has a good central post for his knight on e4. Kasparov's energetic play, right until the end of the game, is highly instructive.

14. g3-g4!

Black now realized that the central post of his e4 knight cannot be maintained after all.

14. ... ♕d8-e7

If 14...fxg4, White gets a strong initiative after 15.♘e5, and now:

A) In case of 15...♘xe5 16.♗xe4 ♘g6, the following line illustrates White's attacking potential: 17.♗xg6 hxg6 18.♕xg6 ♕d7 19.d5! b6 (or 19...♕e7 20.♗a3 ♕e3+ 21.♖f2) 20.♗a3! ♗b7 21.e4 c5 22.♖f5! ♖xe4 23.♖bf1 ♗xd5 24.♖h5 and Black is mated;

B) 15...♘d6 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.e4 with promising play.

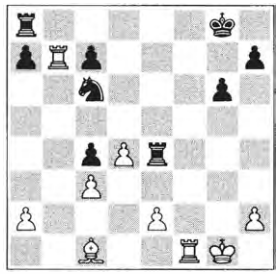
In general, after 14.g4!, Black has to make difficult decisions and he is often forced to choose between a rock and a hard place.

15. g4xf5 ♘e4-d6

If 15...♗xf5:

A) Possible, but rather unclear is 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 (16...♘xc3?? is a blunder due to 17.♕xc3 ♗xb1 18.♕xc4+ ♔h8 19.♘f7+ ♔g8 20.♗g5) 17.♖xf5 ♘g4 18.♗f4;

B) 16.♘g5 g6 (or 16...♗g6 17.♘xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 ♕xe4 19.♕xe4 ♖xe4 20.♖xb7 ♖c8 21.♖f2) 17.♘xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 ♕xe4 19.♕xe4 ♖xe4 20.♖xb7.



analysis diagram

White is clearly better in this endgame, for instance: 20...♘e7 21.♖xc7 ♖xe2 22.a4 ♘d5 23.♖xc4 ♖c2 24.♖c5 ♘xc3 25.♔h1 and White wins, because Black cannot solve the problem of his pinned knight.

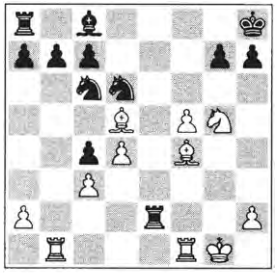
16. ♘f3-g5! ♕e7xe2

17. ♗g2-d5+ ♔g8-h8

18. ♕c2xe2 ♖e8xe2

19. ♗c1-f4

The queen swap has not helped Black and White's mating attack continues with unabated vigour.



19. ... ♘c6-d8

19...♘e7 loses to 20.♗f3 ♖xa2 21.♗xd6 cxd6 22.♖be1; or 19...♗xf5 20.♗xd6 ♗xb1 21.♘f7+ ♔g8 22.♘d8+ ♔h8 23.♖f8 mate.

20. ♗f4xd6 c7xd6

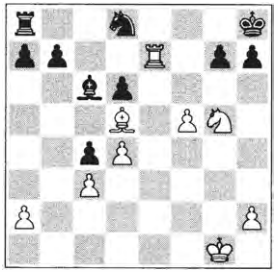
21. ♖b1-e1!

Exchanging Black's only active piece and entering the black position with the rook. It is quite amazing that with the relatively limited number of pieces remaining on the board, Black still cannot avoid being mated.

21. ... ♖e2xe1

22. ♖f1xe1 ♗c8-d7

23. ♖e1-e7 ♗d7-c6



24. f5-f6!

Finishing the game in style. There can follow: 24...♗xd5 25.♖e8+ ♗g8 26.f7 ♘xf7 27.♘xf7 mate.

Black resigned.

Chapter 2

Isolated Pawns

Introduction

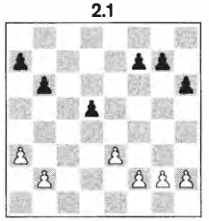
In Chapter 2 I have followed a similar structure as in the chapter on doubled pawns, with the difference that here I have divided the material into two sections. The first section shows several successfully employed strategies to fight against the isolated pawn, while the second section is focused on plans to be implemented by the side that has the isolated pawn.

Isolated pawn structures are arguably the structures that arise from the most different openings (Tarrasch Defence and Semi-Tarrasch, Queen's Gambit Accepted, Queen's Gambit Declined, Nimzo-Indian Defence, Meran Variation, Ragozin Variation, Petroff Defence, etc.) and are therefore very important positions to understand, regardless of the opening preferences a player may have. In the comments to the games, a club player will be explained not only the main strategic ideas, but he will also receive a lot of information about the openings played.

If the reader takes enough time to study this chapter, he should be well-armed to meet a number of variations in practical tournament play.

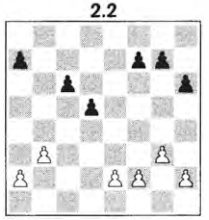
A) Playing against an isolated pawn

2.1



Structure 2.1 (Game 20 – Ivanchuk-Aronian). Here a classical isolated pawn-position is reached, where the side fighting against the isolated pawn has a good blockade while the side with the isolated pawn has seemingly enough counterplay to make a draw. With masterful play, Ivanchuk first quashes Aronian's counterplay and then exploits the weakness of the isolated pawn.

2.2

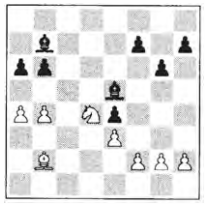


Structure 2.2 (Game 21 – Kramnik-Illescas Cordoba). In one of the main variations of the Tarrasch Defence, fighting against an isolated pawn, Kramnik employs a well-known strategy of creating a second weakness to target. When the knights are exchanged on c6, Black recaptures with his b7 pawn and now, instead of an isolated pawn on d5, the newly-created weakness on c6 is the object of White's attention. In our main game (Kramnik-

Illescas Cordoba) and other games featured in the comments (Kasparov-Illescas Cordoba, Sokolov-Petrosian and Ljubojevic-Gligoric), this classical strategy is explained.

Structure 2.3 (Game 22 – Jaracz-P.H.Nielsen). In this game another strategy is employed. Fighting against an isolated pawn, White at some stage exchanges a black knight on e4 and after Black recaptures with ...d5xe4, a relative pawn symmetry is reached, where White's pieces are better placed for the ensuing actions.

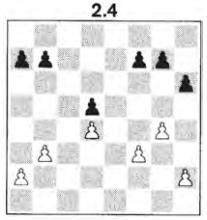
2.3



B) Playing with an isolated pawn

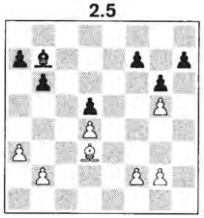
Structure 2.4 (Game 23 – Petrosian-Spassky). In this beautiful classic World Championship encounter, Spassky, playing with an isolated pawn, at some stage exchanges knights on d4, and after Petrosian recaptures e3xd4, a pawn symmetry in the centre (white d4/black d5) is reached, which drastically changes the strategic objectives. In general, given the fact that both sides have a light-squared bishop remaining (the dark-squared ones have been exchanged), such a transaction should in general favour White. However, with the beautiful knight manoeuvre 32...♘h7!, Spassky brilliantly shows the deficiencies of the white position and wins the game in style.

2.4



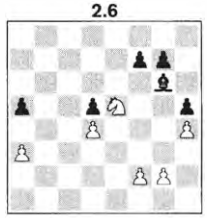
Structure 2.5 (Game 24 – Sokolov-Cebalo). In my own game I employed a similar strategy; at some stage exchanging knights on d5, and after the forced recapture ...e6xd5, a pawn symmetry in the centre (white d4/black d5) is reached, where the superiority of White's light-squared bishop to his black colleague (the dark ones being exchanged), combined with White's control of the e5-square, along with the kingside attack that is developed, plays a crucial role.

2.5



Structure 2.6 (Game 25 – Kasparov-Karpov and Game 26 – Sokolov-Schandorff). Here, the same central exchange transaction occurs as in the two previous games (Petrosian-Spassky and Sokolov-Cebalo), with the difference that now White has a knight as a minor piece and Black a light-squared bishop. In general, the knight is superior here. Most of the time, Black's light-squared bishop combines badly with his own pawn on d5 – a light square –, and the dark-squared bishops are already exchanged.

2.6



Structure 2.7 (Game 27 – Beliavsky-Illescas Cordoba) shows a beautiful, original rook manoeuvre, executed by Illescas Cordoba playing with an isolated pawn.

2.7

Structure 2.8 (Game 28 – Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky and Game 29 – Sokolov-Nikolic): White, playing with an isolated pawn, executes a d4-d5 pawn break, after which a few pieces are exchanged. When a pawn symmetry is left on the board (two vs two on the queenside, three vs three on the kingside), White will have a dominantly-placed piece on the d5-square, causing trouble for Black.

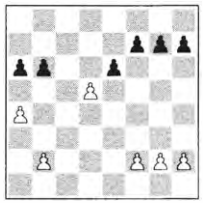
2.8

Game 30 (Kramnik-Hübner) shows a slightly unorthodox and uncommon idea: White sacrifices his central (isolated) pawn in order to eliminate Black's bishop pair and gain a few tempi to develop an initiative.

Structure 2.9 (Game 31 – Kasparov-Timman). Here and in the following games we analyse an important strategic idea for White, where he sacrifices his isolated pawn under different circumstances (mostly by playing d4-d5), either to disorganize Black's pieces or to take advantage (should Black recapture with a pawn) of a beautiful newly-created outpost for the knight on d4, as well as the open e-file for the white rook on e1, which creates various sacrificial motifs around taking the black bishop on e7 with the rook. In our first game (Kasparov-Timman), the purpose is to take advantage of the disorganizationof Black's pieces caused by the sacrifice.

2.9

2.10

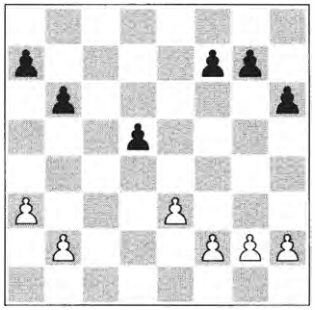


Structure 2.10 (Game 32 – Petrosian-Spassky, Game 33 – Kramnik-Anand 1999 and Game 34 – Kramnik-Anand 2001). These games excellently show White's attacking potential should Black capture the pawn sacrificed on d5 with his e6 pawn.

Game 35 (Illescas Cordoba-Short) again shows the power of the pieces after a central break with the isolated pawn, this time by Black with ...d5-d4. An excellent learning example demonstrated by Short. In the comments to this game and the analysis diagram (the game Karpov-Kir.Georgiev in the comments), please observe the powerful strategy of the 12th World Champion, showing that after a potential exchange of pawns on the queenside in a particular variation of the Tartakower Variation of the Orthodox Queen's Gambit, White's a4 and d4 pawns, which also seem weak, are not much of a reason to worry, while Black's pawns on b6 and c6 could worry him for a long time to come.

A) Playing against an isolated pawn

Structure 2.1



Pure blockade

Exploring isolated pawn positions, I would like to start with several instructive examples of play against the isolated pawn. The Tarrasch Defence is a perfect variation to study this type of position. As we will see from many examples in this book, former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik has played many excellent games against as well as with the isolated pawn. Given the fact that such positions occur frequently, it is worth spending a considerable amount of time on them to learn the ins and outs.

NI 27.7 (D38) **GAME 20**

Vasily Ivanchuk

Levon Aronian

Morelia/Linares 2007 (7)

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
5.	**♗c1-g5**	**♘b8-d7**
6.	**c4xd5**	**e6xd5**
7.	**♕d1-c2**	

Starting somewhere in the beginning of the nineties, this move became more popular than the old main line 7.e3.

7.	**...**	**c7-c5**

The other, less played but rather interesting continuation here is 7...h6 and after 8.♗h4 g5! (the correct reaction; in case of 8...c5 White gets a better game after 9.e3 c4 10.♗e2 ♕a5 11.0-0 (11.♘d2 0-0 12.♗f3 should also be better for White) 11...♗xc3 12.bxc3 ♘e4 (here it is obvious that the inclusion of 7...h6 8.♗h4 favours White, as otherwise the bishop on g5 would be attacked now) 13.♖fc1 ♘b6. White now gave an instructive demonstration: 14.a4! ♗f5 15.♕b2 0-0 16.♗d1! ♖fe8 17.♖a2 f6 18.♘d2 ♗d7 19.♘f1! with f3 to follow, with a clear advantage for White in the second match game Kramnik-Lautier, Cannes 1993) 9.♗g3 ♘e4 10.♘d2 (the natural 10.e3 leads to very complicated play after 10...h5!

11.h4 g4 12.♘g5 ♘xg3 13.fxg3 ♕e7 14.0-0-0! ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♖h6! 16.♗d3 f6 17.♘h7, as seen in Sokolov-Rainfray, France tt 2003) 10...♘xg3 11.hxg3 ♘b6 12.a3 ♗f8! and Black had an equal game in Van Wely-Elianov, Foros 2007.

8. a2-a3

It is already clear that a position with an isolated pawn is likely to arise. White could have forced this immediately with 8.dxc5.

A) Now, rather passive and not in the spirit of the position is 8...♘xc5, since after the virtually forced 9.a3 ♗xc3+ 10.♕xc3 ♘ce4 11.♗xf6 ♕xf6 12.♕xf6 ♘xf6 13.e3 ♗d7 14.♘d4 White has a small but lasting advantage, pressing for a win without any risk;

B) However, Black has good piece play to compensate for the pawn weakness after 8...h6 and now:

B1) Enterprising, but no good is 9.♗xf6 ♕xf6 10.0-0-0 ♗xc3 11.♕xc3 ♕xc3+ 12.bxc3 ♘f6 13.e4?! dxe4 (13...♘xe4 would allow White to justify his idea after 14.♖xd5 ♗e6 15.♗b5+ ♔e7 16.♖e5! ♘xf2 (or 16...♘xc3 17.♗c4) 17.♖he1 ♘g4 18.♖5e2 ♖hc8 19.c6! bxc6 20.♗a6 ♖e8 21.♘d4 and White is better) 14.♗b5+ ♗d7 (14...♔e7 15.♘d4 looks better for White) 15.♘d4 0-0-0! 16.♖he1 ♖he8 and Black is better;

B2) 9.♗d2 0-0 10.a3 ♗xc5 11.e3 a6 12.♗e2 ♗d6 13.0-0 ♘e5 14.♖fd1 ♗e6 15.♖ac1 ♖c8 16.♕b1 ♘c4 17.♘d4 ♗e5 and due to his nicely developed pieces Black had a slight initiative in Aronian-Lautier, ICC Petrosian Memorial 2004.

8. ... ♗b4xc3+

9. ♕c2xc3

White has to take with the queen, since after the pawn capture 9.bxc3?! comes 9...♕a5 with ...♘e4 to follow.

9. ... h7-h6

10. ♗g5xf6

Trying to keep the bishop with 10.♗h4? is simply bad after 10...g5 11.♗g3 ♘e4.

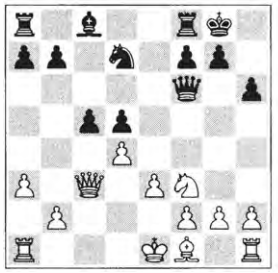
10. ... ♕d8xf6

11. e2-e3

The other option is to play against an isolated pawn in the ending after 11.♕e3+ ♕e7 12.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 13.dxc5 ♘xc5 14.♖c1.

In the stem game Van Wely-Piket, Eindhoven ch-NED 1993, White could hope for an edge after 14...♘e4 15.e3 ♗d7 16.♗d3. The black knight, however, is better placed on e6 and with 14...♘e6 instead of 14...♘e4, controlling the d4-square, Black gains easy equality.

11. ... 0-0



12. ♗f1-e2

White plans to finish his development and then, at a favourable moment, to capture on c5, creating an isolated pawn. Forcing Black to make a decision in the centre with 12.♗b5?! may look positionally sound, but Black gets excellent play on the queenside after 12...c4! 13.♗xd7 (if 13.0-0?, then 13...♘b6 with ...a7-a6 to follow, and the white bishop gets stuck) 13...♗xd7 14.♘e5 ♗f5 15.b3 b5 16.0-0 ♕e6 and after 17...f6 the pride of White's position, the e5 knight, is kicked back, while Black has all the trumps.

12. ... b7-b6

Closing the centre with 12...c4 is now different, since White does not have to allow Black to advance his queenside pawns. White's chances are to be preferred after 13.0-0 b6 (or 13...♖e8 14.a4 b6 15.b3) 14.b3.

13. 0-0 ♗c8-b7

In Yakovich-Sargissian, Moscow Aeroflot 2007, Black prepared to advance his queenside pawns with 13...a6 in order, after 14.♖ac1, to push 14...c4. A principled battle ensued, both sides having their trumps: 15.♘e5 b5 16.f4 ♕d6 17.♗f3 ♗b7. White has to be quick with his kingside action, before Black starts rolling his pawns on the queenside. In such positions, which can arise from different openings, the choice is often a matter of taste. I have played plenty of similar positions and mostly preferred White.

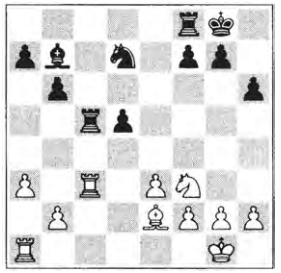
18.g4 ♖fe8 19.♖ce1 ♘f8 20.g5! hxg5 21.fxg5 and White seized the initiative.

14. ♖f1-c1 ♖a8-c8

Sensing that White plans to capture on c5, creating an isolated pawn, Black prepares counterplay along the c-file.

15. d4xc5 ♕f6xc3

16. ♖c1xc3 ♖c8xc5



It seems that all four rooks are soon going to be exchanged along the c-file, resulting in an easy draw for Black. But as we will soon see, the c-file is not that important here.

Opting for two hanging pawns in the centre with 16...bxc5? would not be wise here, since White can undermine these pawns with the standard 17.b4! c4 18.♘d4 and with a dominant knight and better pawn structure, White has a massive, probably winning advantage.

17. ♖c3-c1!!

A beautiful move. White keeps the rooks on in order to target the weak isolated pawn on d5. For his part, Black cannot create any counterplay related to his control of the c-file.

17. ... ♖f8-c8

18. ♖c1-d1 ♖c5-c2

19. ♗e2-b5!

An important tempo.

19. ... ♘d7-f8

20. ♖a1-b1

On the next move, the black rook will be kicked out.

20. ... ♖c2-c7

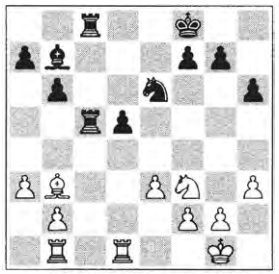
21. ♗b5-a4 ♘f8-e6

22. ♗a4-b3 ♔g8-f8

23. h2-h3!

White wants to take the d5 pawn on his own terms. Taking it immediately would result in a drawish endgame: 23.♗xd5?! ♗xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖c1+ 25.♖d1 ♖xb1 26.♖xb1 ♖c2 and due to his active rook, Black should hold.

23. ... ♖c7-c5



It seems that White will not be able to improve his position, and Black will achieve a draw after all. The technique that Ivanchuk now displays to convert his small advantage into a full point is an excellent learning example for amateurs and grandmasters alike!

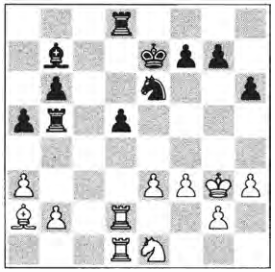
24. ♔g1-h2!!

Stepping away from a check on c1, in order to double the rooks along the d-file. It is very important for White to keep all four rooks on the board.

24. ... ♔f8-e7
25. ♖d1-d2 ♖c5-b5
26. ♗b3-a2 ♖b5-c5
27. ♘f3-e1! a7-a5

The attempt to become active with 27...♖c1 would not help Black after 28.♖xc1 ♖xc1 29.♘d3 ♖a1 30.♘b4 d4 (the d5 pawn will be lost anyhow) 31.exd4 ♘f4 32.d5 ♔d6 33.♗b3 ♖e1 34.♘c6!.

28. ♖b1-d1 ♖c8-d8
29. ♔h2-g3 ♖c5-b5
30. f2-f3



30. ... ♖d8-c8?

30...♘c5 looks like the best defence, but does not solve the problems, since after 31.e4 ♘b3 32.♗xb3 ♖xb3 33.exd5 ♔d6 34.♘d3 ♖b5 (or 34...♖e8 35.♘c1! ♖b5 36.♘a2) 35.♘f4 Black has a hard time ahead.

31. ♘e1-d3!

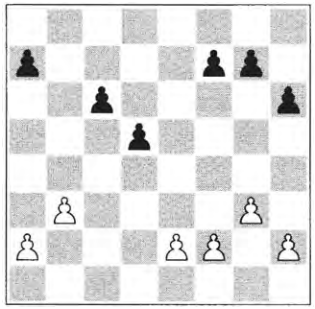
Threatening to trap the b5 rook with 32.a4, so Black has to give a pawn.

31. ... d5-d4
32. ♗a2xe6 ♔e7xe6
33. ♘d3-f4+ ♔e6-e7
34. ♖d2xd4

White is now a sound pawn up, with the better position besides. The game is decided – the rest is agony for Black.

34. ... ♖c8-c7
35. ♖d1-d2 ♖b5-c5
36. e3-e4 ♖c5-c4
37. ♖d4-d6 ♖c4-c6
38. e4-e5 ♖c6-c2
39. ♖d2xc2 ♖c7xc2
40. ♖d6xb6 ♗b7-c6
41. b2-b4 g7-g5
42. ♘f4-h5 a5xb4
43. a3xb4 ♗c6-d5
44. ♘h5-g7 ♖c2-e2
45. ♘g7-f5+ ♔e7-e8
46. ♘f5xh6 ♗d5-e6
47. ♖b6-b5 ♖e2-b2
48. ♖b5-b8+ ♔e8-d7
49. ♖b8-g8 1-0

Structure 2.2



Creation of a new weakness

TD 4.16 (D34) **GAME 21**

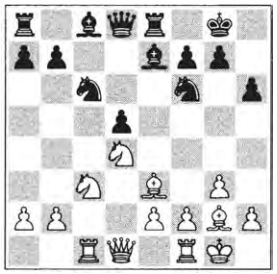
Vladimir Kramnik
Miguel Illescas Cordoba
Linares 1994 (6)

1. d2-d4 e7-e6
2. c2-c4 d7-d5
3. ♘g1-f3 c7-c5
4. c4xd5 e6xd5
5. ♘b1-c3 ♘b8-c6
6. g2-g3 ♘g8-f6
7. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-e7
8. 0-0 0-0
9. ♗c1-g5

One of the two main moves here, 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗g5 being the other option.

9. ... c5xd4
10. ♘f3xd4 h7-h6
11. ♗g5-e3 ♖f8-e8
12. ♖a1-c1

This is one of many moves here, played very frequently in the beginning of the 1980s and enjoying new popularity lately. It should be noted that the pawn structure can easily transform.



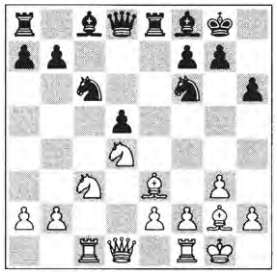
White may decide to take on c6 and play against the two connected pawns, targeting the newly-created weakness on c6 or, should Black decide to put his bishop on e6, White would take with the knight and then try to take profit from the bishop pair.

12. ... ♗e7-f8

The other principled way to play this position is 12...♗g4 and after 13.h3 ♗e6, White normally does not capture the bishop immediately (which would improve Black's pawn structure), but play some useful moves like 14.♔h2 ♕d7

15.♕b3 (trying to play against the weak c-pawn with 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♘a4 does not bring anything: 16...♗f5 17.♗c5 ♗d8! 18.♗d4 ♘e4, Züger-Kasparov, Zurich 1987) 15...♖ac8 16.♖fd1, with an advantage for White.

In Van Wely-Magomedov, Yerevan Olympiad 1996, Black now blundered with 16...♘e5??, which White failed to punish with 17.♘xe6 (he played 17.♕b5? and was slightly better, but only drew in the end) 17...fxe6 18.♘xd5!! exd5 19.♖xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5+ ♔h8 21.♗e6, winning.



13. ♘c3-a4

White decides to remain focused on the d5 weakness. The other way was to take on c6 in order to create and focus on a new weakness for Black. This used to be the main plan here – and it looks rather logical to me as well. I will give some examples:

13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘a4 and now:

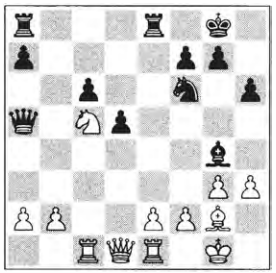
A) The attempt to create counterplay with 14...♕a5? does not work since the tactics favour White after 15.♖xc6! ♗d7 16.♗d2! (16.♖xf6 ♗xa4 17.b3 gxf6 18.bxa4 can also be considered) 16...♕b5 (16...♗b4 leads to a very difficult endgame for Black after 17.♖c5 ♕xa4 18.♕xa4 ♗xa4 19.♗xb4 ♖xe2 20.♖a5! ♗d7 21.♗c3) 17.♖xf6 ♕xa4 (in case of 17...gxf6 18.♘c3 ♕xb2 19.♘xd5 White soon gets his minimal material investment back, obtaining a winning advantage) 18.♕xa4 ♗xa4 19.♖f5 and White is a sound pawn up;

B) 14...♗d7 15.♗c5 ♗xc5 16.♘xc5. White's strategy is rather clear. The dark-squared bishops have been exchanged, the knight on c5 is a strong, dominant piece and the black pawn on c6 is a newly-created weakness. Black has to create counterplay in order to achieve a dynamic balance. However, without the dark-squared bishops and with the white knight so well placed on c5, counterplay is not easy to find.

It should also be mentioned that almost all further piece exchanges favour White: 16...♗g4 17.♖e1 and now:

B1) The stem game in this line, Ljubojevic-Gligoric, Bugojno 1978, continued 17...♕b6 18.♕c2 ♖ad8 19.h3 ♗c8 20.b3 ♕b8 21.e3 ♖e7 22.♖ed1 (with his firm control over the dark squares, White easily improves his position, while for Black counterplay is nowhere to be found) 22...♖de8 23.♖d4 ♘h7 24.♕d2 ♘g5 25.h4 ♘e6 26.♘xe6 ♖xe6 27.♕b4 ♕b6 28.♕c5 and White continued to build on his dark-square domination and won easily;

B2) 17...♕a5 18.h3 and now:



analysis diagram

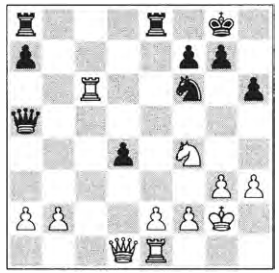
B21) 18...♗f5 was played in Kasparov-Illescas Cordoba, Linares 1994. The play by the former World Champion was very instructive. The game continued 19.♕d4 ♖ab8 20.a3 ♕b5 21.b3! (cautious and strong. The immediate 21.b4 would allow 21...a5!, when White would have to be clever enough to force a drawish endgame with 22.♕f4! ♗g6 23.♘b3! axb4 24.♘d4 ♕b7 25.axb4 (not 25.♘xc6? b3!) 25...♕xb4 26.♘xc6 ♕xf4 27.gxf4 ♖b2) 21...♘e4 (21...♖xe2?? would be a terrible blunder, losing a piece after 22.♖xe2 ♕xe2 23.♕f4) 22.b4! (great play. The situation has changed and White need not fear the ...a7-a5 break any more) 22...a5 23.♘xe4 ♗xe4 24.♖c5 ♕b6 25.bxa5 and White was a sound pawn up, soon converting it into a full point;

B22) 18...♗h5 is the latest attempt to improve on the previous examples and create the much-desired dynamic balance: 19.♘d3 (with the black bishop on h5, the e2 pawn is attacked and Kasparov's play could not be copied. However, the drawback of Black's strategy is that with the bishop on h5, White has a possibility to transfer his knight to f4 with tempo) 19...♗g6 (the other, probably better option was 19...♕xa2! 20.♖xc6 ♗g6! 21.♘b4 (21.♘f4 ♗e4!) 21...♕xb2 22.♘xd5 ♘xd5 23.♗xd5 ♔h7 24.e4 ♖ac8 and a draw should be the most likely outcome) 20.♘f4 and now:

B221) 20...♕xa2 21.♘xg6 fxg6 22.♖xc6 ♕xb2 is better than it looks, since after 23.♗xd5+ ♘xd5 24.♕xd5+ ♔h8! (24...♔h7 25.♕d3) 25.♖xg6 a5! the a-pawn is very strong and Black should be able to draw;

B222) On the other hand, in case of a passive defence with 20...♕b6 21.♘xg6 fxg6 22.b3 ♖e6, White improves his position with 23.e3 ♖f8 24.♖e2 with ♖ec2 to follow, and the black pawn weakness on c6 will start to become visible;

B223) 20...♗e4 21.♖xc6 ♗xg2 22.♔xg2 d4 (an attempt at dynamic play. Regaining the pawn with 22...♕xa2 would lead to a better game for White after 23.♕a1 ♕b3 24.♕a3)



analysis diagram

23.♕c1! (an important move) 23...♘d5 (Black continues his attempts to solve problems tactically. In the event of 23...♕xa2 the idea behind White's previous move would become clear: 24.♕c4! ♕xc4 (24...♕xb2?? loses to 25.♖c7 ♖f8 26.♘g6) 25.♖xc4 and Black remains stuck with his pawn weaknesses) 24.♘d3! ♘b4 (to 24...♕xa2 White again responds with 25.♕c4) 25.♘xb4 ♕xb4 (White is a pawn up, but Black has some temporary activity) 26.♖c4 ♕b7+ 27.♔g1 ♕d7 28.♕f4 ♖ad8 29.♖d1! (making use of a tactical motif) 29...♕xh3 30.♖cxd4 ♖xd4 31.♕xd4 a6 (31...♖xe2?? blunders a rook after 32.♕d8+ ♔h7 33.♕d3+) 32.e3 and White was a sound pawn up. Later he exchanged the

queens and won the rook endgame easily, Sokolov-T.L. Petrosian, European Club Cup, Kemer 2007.

I have to admit that in my preparation for this game, for my decision which variation to choose Kasparov's game played a crucial role. This decision-making process is in no way connected to the pawn structure theme, but may be useful for readers to know.

In the past ten years or so, my main weapon against the Tarrasch was the main line (like in the game): 9.♗g5 cxd4 10.♘xd4 h6 11.♗f4 (instead of 11.♗e3), leading to a slightly better endgame for White. A few months before my game against Petrosian, I had a game against Akobian. In the slightly better endgame that resulted after 11.♗f4, I never had any real winning chances and the game ended in a dull draw. Now, facing Petrosian, I knew the Tarrasch would appear on the board. I had only about two hours to prepare and wanted to play something new.

Under those circumstances it is useful to check the games of the world's very best. Should the line chosen by them suit you and not seem too complicated to prepare in a few hours, PLAY IT. In my professional career this strategy has served me very well.

13. ... ♗c8-d7

The active 13...♕a5? is bad due to 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♖xc6! ♗d7 16.♗d2!, transposing to one of the previous comments – see 13.♘c6 bc6 14.♘a4 ♕a5?, while in the case of 13...♘g4 White is better after 14.♘xc6 bxc6 15.♗d4.

14. ♘a4-c5 ♘c6-a5

Not an easy choice. This knight looks clumsy at the edge of the board, but other moves also do not create the kind of play Black is hoping for.

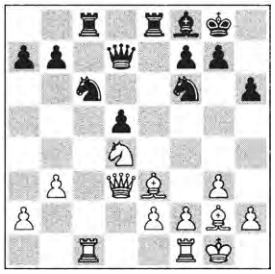
In general, Kramnik's plan is perhaps a sophisticated version of the already discussed 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘a4, since in the current position the b7 pawn hangs, creating an extra problem for Black, while White keeps most of his positional trumps. In case you're wondering why I didn't play it myself (against Petrosian) – well, having limited time to prepare, I checked only Kasparov's White games against the Tarrasch!

15. b2-b3

Limiting the scope of the a5 knight.

15. ... ♖a8-c8
16. ♘c5xd7 ♕d8xd7
17. ♕d1-d3 ♘a5-c6

Trying to play 'actively' with 17...♘e4? would be bad after the simple 18.♖xc8 ♕xc8 (18...♖xc8 loses a pawn without any compensation after 19.♗xe4 dxe4 20.♕xe4) 19.♖c1 ♕d7 20.♕b5, with a winning advantage for White.



18. ♘d4xc6!

Quite rightly, Kramnik now decides to change the pawn structure and focus on the newly-created weakness. The logical 18.♖fd1 would reveal the drawback of 15.b3 after 18...♗a3! 19.♖b1 ♗c5 with good play for Black, since after 20.♘xc6?! he has a thematic exchange sacrifice in 20...♖xe3! (not 20...♗xe3 21.♘b4!) 21.fxe3 bxc6, with at the very least good compensation.

18. ... b7xc6
19. ♖f1-d1 ♕d7-b7
20. ♗e3-c5

White now uses similar positional plans to those we have already seen under 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘a4.

20. ... ♗f8xc5
21. ♖c1xc5 ♕b7-e7
22. ♖c5-c2 ♕e7-a3
23. e2-e3

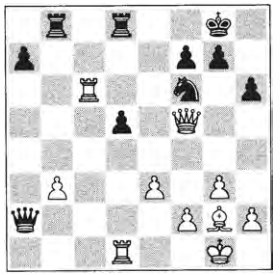
Black is facing a very difficult defence. Due to his better pawn structure, White has a lasting advantage, while Black does not have dynamic activity to nearly compensate for the positional problems related to his weak pawns.

It is important to note that transitions from an isolated pawn to two weak hanging pawns are a very common way to combat the isolated pawn. Contrary to parallel hanging pawns in the centre, such weak connected pawns are by definition not mobile, so there are no tactics that can be based on their mobility.

23. ... ♖e8-d8
24. ♕d3-f5 ♖c8-b8?!

Black prefers not to stay passive. A good idea in general; however, it does not work here. It was better to opt for 24...♕a6 or 24...♕d6.

25. ♖c2xc6 ♕a3xa2



26. ♖c6xf6!

A rather thematic exchange sacrifice.

26. ... g7xf6

Trying to be tricky with 26...♕xb3? would not help after 27.♕g4 h5 28.♕xh5 gxf6 29.♗xd5, winning.

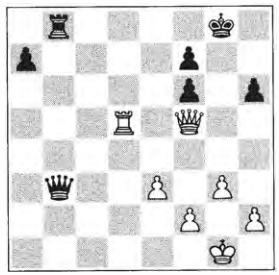
27. ♗g2xd5 ♖d8xd5

Black is obliged to return the exchange, either immediately or after 27...♔g7 28.♕g4+ ♔f8 29.♕h5.

28. ♖d1xd5 ♕a2xb3

Black has ended up with a damaged pawn structure on the kingside, but there are not that many pieces left on the board and there is material equality, so at first sight it seems that Black should have reasonable drawing chances. If he managed to exchange either queens or rooks, even losing his a-pawn in the process, he would reach the safety of a draw.

It is rather possible that Illescas Cordoba aimed for this position when playing 24...♖b8, believing – with good reason – that he would have reasonable drawing chances. Kramnik, however, does not allow exchanges and keeps the pressure on. Having to defend a difficult position, Illescas Cordoba ultimately loses his way.



29. ♕f5-g4+ ♔g8-h7
30. ♖d5-d6 ♕b3-b1+

31. ♔g1-g2 ♕b1-g6
32. ♕g4-f3 ♔h7-g7
33. ♖d6-a6 ♖b8-b5?!

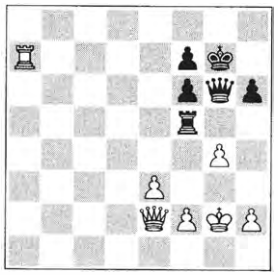
Black loses his a-pawn, but the problems related to his exposed king remain. A better defence was 33...♖e8! 34.♖a4 ♖e5 35.h4 h5, using the fact that either the queen or the rook ending with four versus three pawns on the same side, is a draw.

34. ♖a6xa7 ♖b5-f5
35. ♕f3-e2 ♕g6-h5?

A tactical miscalculation, obviously thought up when he played 33...♖b5.

36. g3-g4 ♕h5-g6?

An outright blunder. 36...♖g5 was the only move.

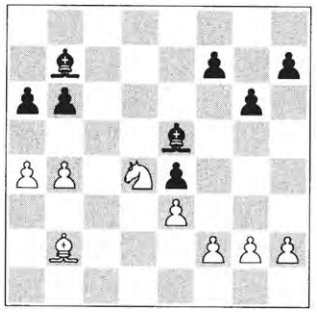


37. ♖a7xf7+! ♔g7xf7
38. ♕e2-c4+

Black resigned.

He ends up two pawns down: 38...♔f8 39.♕c8++−; 38...♔e7 39.♕e4++−; or 38...♔g7 39.♕c7+ ♔g8 40.♕c8++−.

Structure 2.3



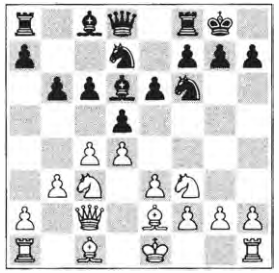
Transferring into a favourable pawn symmetry

In isolated pawn-positions, one of the sides often chooses the right moment to exchange a pair of minor pieces in the centre (mostly knights) in order to reach a favourable symmetry. Such structural transformations are very common and with the next few games I will try to give a few good examples.

SL 8.5 (D45) **GAME 22**

Pawel Jaracz
Peter Heine Nielsen
Dresden Ech 2007 (4)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5
4. ♘b1-c3 c7-c6
5. e2-e3 ♘b8-d7
6. ♕d1-c2 ♗f8-d6
7. b2-b3 0-0
8. ♗f1-e2 b7-b6



This is one of the most common positions in the 6.♕c2 Meran and has been one of the main lines over the years. All of the logical moves, 8...♖e8, 8...e5, 8...dxc4, 8...♕e7 and 8...a6, have been tried in hundreds of games. The game continuation also belongs to the main moves here.

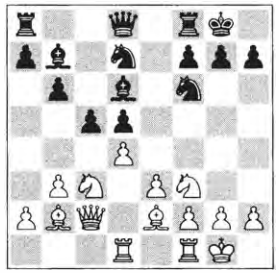
9. 0-0 ♗c8-b7
10. ♗c1-b2 c6-c5

Taking action in the centre. Black can also delay this decision and first play some useful moves, like 10...♕e7, 10...♖e8, or 10...♖c8.

11. c4xd5

The strategic features of the position are becoming visible. It is rather clear that the current situation in the centre will transform to a position where Black will either have two parallel hanging pawns in the centre, or an isolated pawn.

11. ... e6xd5
12. ♖a1-d1



12. ... ♕d8-e7

In case of 12...♖c8 13.dxc5 bxc5, a complex position with two hanging central pawns is reached. In 1994 I had an interesting game of my own, which continued 14.♕f5! (stepping up the pressure on Black's central pawns) 14...♕e7 and now:

A) Now 15.♗b5 plays into Black's hands after 15...♘e5;

B) Kramnik-Kasparov, 8th blitz match game, Moscow 1998, produced interesting and dynamic play after 15.♖fe1 ♕e6 16.♕b1 h6 17.♗d3 ♘e5! 18.♗f5 ♘xf3+ 19.gxf3 ♕e5 20.f4 ♕e8 21.♗h3 ♖d8 22.♗g2 ♕e6 with a complicated game;

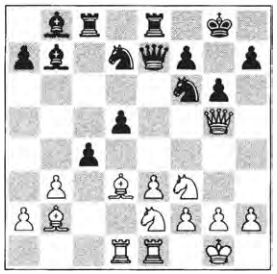
C) 15.♗d3 and now:

C1) 15...♘e5? simply blunders a pawn after 16.♘xd5!;

C2) On the other hand 15...♕e6 should definitely be considered;

C3) 15...♖fe8 16.♖fe1 (with a black rook on e8, 16.♗b5!?, pinning the knight, was another option) 16...♗b8 17.♘e2 (with both white bishops working and the knights getting transferred to the kingside, threats will soon

be created) 17...g6 18.♕g5 c4 (Black tries to create threats of his own, but misses some tactical shots. Another option was to steer the game into the endgame with 18...♘e5 19.♘xe5 ♗xe5 20.♗xe5 ♕xe5 21.♕xe5 ♖xe5, though then White can target the black pawns and keep the advantage with 22.♖c1 a5 23.♖c2, since 23...♖e7 fails to 24.♖ec1 ♖ec7 25.♘d4!)



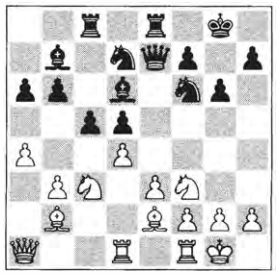
analysis diagram

19.♗f5! (the pins are becoming quite unpleasant for Black) 19...♘e4 (19...h6 does not help, since after 20.♕xh6 gxf5 21.♕g5+ ♔h8 22.♘ed4 White gets a winning attack) 20.♕h6! c3 21.♗a3! (crucial move) 21...♕xa3 22.♗xd7 ♕xa2? (a blunder. Better was 22...c2, though after 23.♖c1 ♖ed8 24.♗xc8 ♖xc8 25.♘fd4! ♕xa2 26.f3 Black's compensation is not sufficient) 23.♗xe8 ♖xe8 24.♖c1 (24.♘xc3! was a direct win: 24...♕xf2+ (24...♘xc3 25.♘g5 is a forced mate) 25.♔h1 ♘xc3 26.♖d2 and the black queen is trapped) 24...♖c8 25.♘fd4 ♕a5 26.f3 and White was clearly better in Sokolov-Lautier, Donner Memorial, Amsterdam 1994.

13. ♘f3-h4

Provoking ...g7-g6 in order to create threats along the a1-h8 diagonal.

13. ... g7-g6
14. ♘h4-f3 ♖a8-c8
15. ♕c2-b1 a7-a6
16. a2-a4 ♖f8-e8
17. ♕b1-a1



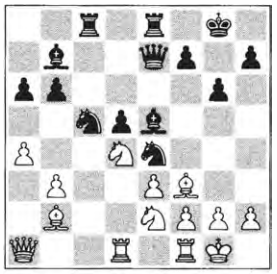
17. ... c5xd4!

Black correctly decides that the time has come to change the pawn structure in the centre. He opts for the isolated pawn position, correctly judging that with his well-placed pieces he has nothing to fear.

18. ♘f3xd4 ♘d7-c5
19. ♗e2-f3 ♗d6-e5

The bishop is well placed on e5, so the potential weakness created by White's 13th move is rather irrelevant at the moment.

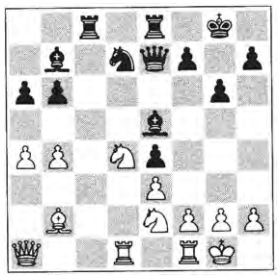
20. ♘c3-e2 ♘f6-e4?



This standard move, though logical in itself, allows a beautiful tactical possibility. It was necessary to first secure the c5 knight with 20...a5! and only then proceed with ...♘fe4, with better chances for Black.

Now White spots a new tactical motif that comes as a consequence of the possibility to change the pawn structure in the centre. Please note that generally, tactics created by a change in pawn structure are very easy to miss.

21. b3-b4! ♘c5-d7
22. ♗f3xe4! d5xe4

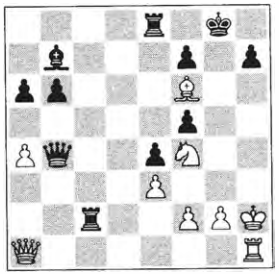


Now the pawn structure is symmetrical, but all of White's pieces are working harmoniously, while Black's b7 bishop is hitting its own pawn. White now executes a very nice positional exchange sacrifice that is worth remembering.

23. ♘d4-f5! g6xf5
24. ♖d1xd7 ♗e5xh2+
25. ♔g1xh2 ♕e7xd7
26. ♘e2-f4

For only an exchange White has full control, the black king is weak, his kingside pawn structure is destroyed, and the b7 bishop is reduced to a mere pawn.

26. ... ♕d7-e7
27. ♖f1-h1! ♖c8-c2
28. ♗b2-f6 ♕e7xb4



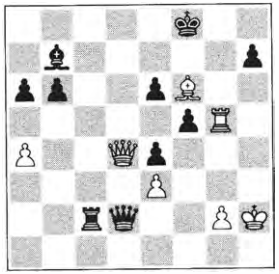
29. ♔h2-g3!

Involving his last piece – the rook – in the attack, which now becomes devastating. The game is decided.

29. ... ♕b4-d2
30. ♖h1-h5 ♕d2xf2+
31. ♔g3-h2

The black monarch has been left on his own without a single piece defending him, while all of the white pieces are participating in the attack.

31. ... ♖e8-e6
32. ♕a1-d4! ♕f2-d2
33. ♖h5-g5+ ♔g8-f8
34. ♘f4xe6+ f7xe6



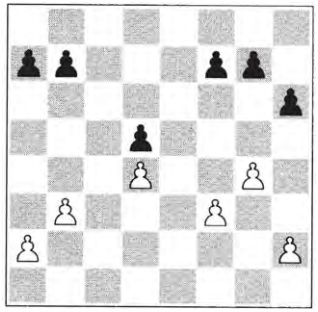
35. ♗f6-e7+!

The final stroke.

35. ... ♔f8xe7
36. ♖g5-g7+ ♔e7-e8
37. ♖g7-g8+ ♔e8-e7
38. ♕d4-g7+ ♔e7-d6
39. ♖g8-d8+ 1-0

B) Playing with an isolated pawn

Structure 2.4



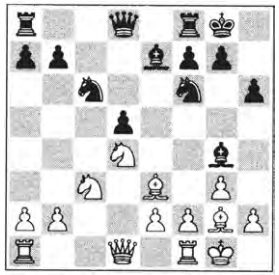
Transferring to a favourable pawn symmetry in the centre

TD 4.16 (D34) **GAME 23**

Tigran V Petrosian
Boris Spassky
Moscow World Championship 1969 (4)

1.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
2.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d5**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**c7-c5**
4.	**c4xd5**	**e6xd5**
5.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**g2-g3**	**♘g8-f6**
7.	**♗f1-g2**	**♗f8-e7**
8.	**0-0**	**0-0**
9.	**♗c1-g5**	**c5xd4**
10.	**♘f3xd4**	**h7-h6**
11.	**♗g5-e3**	**♗c8-g4**

This is a less frequently played, but rather viable alternative to the more popular 11...♖e8. In the 1969 World Championship match, 11...♗g4 was played no less than three times, and it served Spassky well. It is not clear to me why this logical move has all but disappeared from grandmaster practice and 11...♖e8 has become an almost automatic reply.



12. ♘d4-b3

White's idea is to first exert pressure on the d5 pawn, and later play ♗c5 and exchange the dark-squared bishops.

A) 12.♕a4 is another logical continuation, which was played in the 12th game of the match: 12...♘a5! (12...♕d7? looks like a standard move here, but it loses a pawn after 13.♗xd5! ♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♗d8 (14...♕xd5 15.♘xc6 ♕xc6 16.♕xg4) 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♘c3) 13.♖ad1 and now:

A1) Black has to be careful not to blunder into a different kind of tactic. A 'logical' move like 13...♖c8 runs into 14.♘xd5! ♘xd5 15.♘f5! (the point. White gets his piece back, remaining a sound pawn up) 15...♖c4 16.♕b5 ♗xf5 17.♖xd5 a6 18.♕xa5 ♕xa5 19.♖xa5 and White had a technically won endgame in Tal-Zhidkov, Soviet Championship, Baku 1972;

A2) 13...♘c4 14.♗c1 ♕c8 15.♕c2 (after 15.♘xd5? ♘xd5 16.♗xd5 ♘b6 17.♕b3 ♘xd5 18.♕xd5 ♗f6 Black gets strong compensation, worth at least a pawn) 15...♖d8 16.b3 ♘e5 17.♗b2 ♕d7 18.f3! ♗h5 19.♕f5! and White was better.

I think Black's play can be improved with 14...♘b6!, with a good game after 15.♕c2 (or 15.♕b3 ♖c8 16.h3 ♗d7 17.♔h2 ♖c4!) 15...♕d7 16.f3 ♗h5, since now the idea to exchange queens with 17.♕f5 fails to 17...♕e8! and Black was better in Gen. Timoschenko-Sturua, Pavlodar 1982;

B) 12.h3 is another standard move, played by Spassky himself. Black kept dynamic piece play after 12...♗e6 13.♖c1 (it is good to note that per definition Black is never worried about 13.♘xe6 fxe6, since the loss of the bishop pair is fully compensated for by the improvement of his pawn structure) 13...♕d7 14.♔h2 ♘e5! (other moves would allow White, like in Kramnik-Illescas Cordoba (Game 21), to create a new pawn weakness in Black's camp: 15.♘xc6 bxc6 16.♘a4) 15.♕a4 ♕xa4 16.♘xa4 ♘c4 17.♗f4 g5! 18.b3 ♗d7! in Spassky-Kortchnoi, Soviet Championship, Moscow 1957.

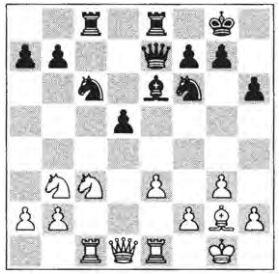
12.	**...**	**♗g4-e6**
13.	**♖a1-c1**	**♖f8-e8**
14.	**♖f1-e1**	

In the second game of the match, Petrosian had opted for a different plan and played 14.♘b5, with the idea to transfer the knight to d4 and then to take on c6, creating a new pawn weakness to focus on. This well-known strategy, which worked well in Kramnik-Illescas Cordoba (Game 21), did not work here, since Black quickly achieved dynamic play and took over the initiative, never allowing White to 'remind' him of his weak c6 pawn: 14...♕d7 15.♘5d4 ♗h3 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.♕d3 ♗xg2 18.♔xg2 a5! 19.♖c2 a4 20.♘d2 (20.♘c5 ♗xc5 is a favourable swap for Black) 20...♕b7 21.f3 ♘d7! – transferring the knight to e5 and preparing ...c6-c5 at the same time. Black was better.

14.	**...**	**♕d8-d7**
15.	**♗e3-c5**	

Exchanging the dark-squared bishops is generally a good strategy here.

15.	**...**	**♖a8-c8**
16.	**♗c5xe7**	**♕d7xe7**
17.	**e2-e3**	



As a result of the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, White has good control of the dark squares in the centre (d4 and c5) and also enough space to

manoeuvre his pieces. White should be slightly better here.

17.... ♖e8-d8

18. ♕d1-e2

18.h3!, to prevent Black's active play, was better, securing White a small advantage.

18. ... ♗e6-g4!

A good move, forcing White to choose between two unpleasant options: either to weaken his own pawn structure and close off the g2 bishop with f2-f3, or to move the queen to f1.

The central pawn break 18...d4, often an equalizer in these positions, does not work that well here: 19.♘xd4 ♘xd4 20.exd4 ♖xd4 21.♘b5 ♖xc1 22.♘xd4! ♖xe1+ 23.♕xe1 and White is better.

19. f2-f3

White will control the e4-square and later place his bishop on h3, but this decision compromises his pawn structure, even though, due to the fact that the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, it is considerably more difficult for Black to make use of this potential weakness. 19.♕f1 was a safer decision.

19. ... ♗g4-f5

20. ♖c1-d1 ♘c6-e5

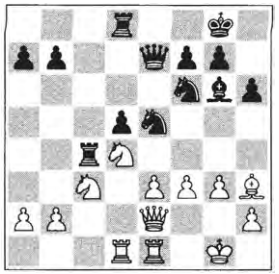
White's pawn structure has been compromised (he has a potential weakness on e3 to worry about), his bishop on g2 is temporarily shut off and cannot exert pressure on the d5 pawn. His small advantage has vanished and he has to be careful to maintain the balance. Black, on the other hand, has easy piece play and the potential weakness of the isolani on d5 does not play any role now.

21. ♘b3-d4 ♗f5-g6

22. ♗g2-h3 ♖c8-c4?!

Keeping the c5-square free for the queen and also planning to put pressure on the d4-square with ...♘c6. This plan has its drawbacks, however, as will soon become clear.

22...♖c5 was another logical option, when White can play 23.♗f5, with approximate equality.



23. g3-g4!

An excellent move that shows the drawbacks of 22...♖c4. White prepares 24.f4. In the event of the immediate 23.f4 Black has 23...♗h5. In the case of 23.♕f1 ♕c5, or 23.♗f5 ♗xf5 24.♘xf5 ♕c5, Black keeps the initiative.

23. ... ♖c4-b4

Running away from the tempo-winning f3-f4 with 23...♘c6? would be a terrible blunder due to 24.♘xd5.

24. b2-b3

For some reason, White hesitates to further pursue his plan started with the previous move. Better and more principled was 24.f4! ♘c4 25.b3 ♘d6 26.f5 ♗h7 27.♗g2 and with the black bishop locked in on h7 and the rook on b4 starting to look clumsy, White is better.

24. ... ♘e5-c6!

Now the possibility for White to advance his f-pawn and shut out the black bishop has vanished forever.

25. ♕e2-d2 ♖b4-b6

26. ♘c3-e2

Heading for f4. Another move was 26.♘a4 ♖a6 (26...♘xd4? is a blunder, since after 27.exd4 ♖e6 28.g5!, Black loses the exchange) 27.♗f1 ♘xd4 28.exd4 ♖e6 29.♘c5 ♖xe1 30.♖xe1 ♕c7, with approximate equality.

26. ... ♗g6-h7

Moving away from the potential ♘f4 tempo. This pre-emptive type of strategy (introduced a long time ago by Nimzowitsch) is often a good idea.

27. ♗h3-g2 ♖d8-e8

28. ♘e2-g3

By preparing ♘df5, White more or less forces Black to take on d4. Another solution was 28.♘f4.

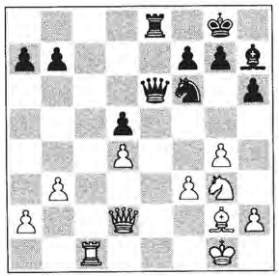
28. ... ♘c6xd4

29. e3xd4 ♖b6-e6

The situation in the centre has changed and an isolated pawn-structure has been transformed into a symmetrical one. Given the fact that the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, a symmetrical pawn structure d4/d5 with only the light-squared bishops present, should, in principle, favour White. However, here Black has control over the e-file, he has a better-placed bishop and the white kingside can become vulnerable.

30. ♖e1xe6 ♕e7xe6

31. ♖d1-c1



31. ... ♗h7-g6!!

Preparing an excellent knight manoeuvre.

32. ♗g2-f1 ♘f6-h7!

This knight is heading for f4.

33. ♕d2-f4 ♘h7-f8

34. ♖c1-c5?

This rook will remain here, doing nothing, until the end of the game.

34. ... ♗g6-b1!

35. a2-a4 ♘f8-g6

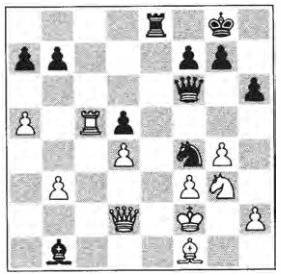
36. ♕f4-d2 ♕e6-f6

In the last few moves, the situation has changed drastically. Black has improved his pieces, while White has simply wasted a few tempi.

37. ♔g1-f2 ♘g6-f4

38. a4-a5?

White was definitely not aware of Black's direct threat. It was necessary to get the rook back into play with 38.♖c3.



38. ... ♗b1-d3!

Black has a winning attack.

39. ♘g3-f5

39.♕c3 loses to 39...♕h4 40.♔g1 ♗xf1 41.♖c8 ♗b5.

39. ... ♕f6-g5!

Threatening 40...♘h3+.

39...♗xf5 40.♕xf4 g5! 41.♕d2 ♗xg4 also wins, but the text is even better.

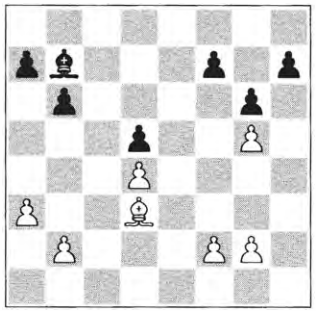
40. ♘f5-e3 ♕g5-h4+

41. ♔f2-g1 ♗d3xf1

White resigned. 42.♘xf1 (or 42.♔xf1 ♕h3+) loses to 42...♖e2.

It is interesting to note how easily a giant like Petrosian could go wrong in a seemingly symmetrical, equal position.

Structure 2.5



NI 15.6 (E48) **GAME 24**

Ivan Sokolov
Miso Cebalo
Pula ch-YUG 1988

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-b4**
4.	**e2-e3**	**c7-c5**
5.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-c6**
6.	**♘g1-e2**	

This variation I played a lot almost twenty years ago. In the resulting isolated pawn-structures, White's kingside knight is placed on e2 rather than, more classically, on f3. Both plans have pros and cons. Based on my experience, however, I would say that in such classical isolated pawn-positions the white kingside knight is in principle better placed on f3.

6.	**...**	**c5xd4**
7.	**e3xd4**	**d7-d5**
8.	**c4xd5**	

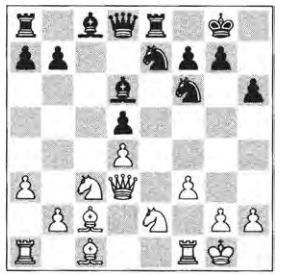
White has better chances of an advantage if he takes on d5 himself, rather than allowing 8.0-0 dxc4 9.♗xc4 0-0.

8. ... ♘f6xd5

One of the important strategic decisions for Black. The other option was 8...exd5, creating a symmetrical pawn structure, which may seem like an easy way to equalize. Things are, however, far from simple. The white knight is now very well placed on e2 (contrary to its colleague on f6), allowing White to advance his kingside pawns, starting a serious attack on the kingside.

One of my own games can serve as a good example: 9.a3 ♗d6 (9...♗xc3+ is a wrong decision here, since White soon develops a strong kingside attack.

A game Kasparov-Tal, Brussels 1987, continued 10.bxc3 0-0 11.0-0 ♘e7?! (a plan that will not help Black. Better was 11...h6) 12.♕c2 ♗d7 13.♗g5 ♘g6 14.f4! (a typical plan, worth remembering) 14...h6 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.f5 ♘e7 17.♘g3 (the queen is extremely badly placed on f6) 17...♘c8 18.♖f4 ♘d6 19.♕f2 ♖fe8 20.♘h5 ♕d8 21.♘xg7 and White soon won) 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗c2 h6 12.♕d3 (it was also possible to start with 12.f3) 12...♖e8 (another idea was to prevent White's subsequent pawn advance with 12...♘e7 13.♘g3 ♖e8, though White is better after 14.♗d2 with 15.♖ae1 to follow) 13.f3 ♘e7



analysis diagram

14.g4! (this is a typical pawn advance in these positions and useful for the reader to remember. White is advancing his pawns on the kingside, gaining space and soon developing a deadly attack. On the other hand, it is rather difficult for Black to create serious counterplay) 14...♘g6 15.♔h1 ♗c7 16.♗d2 ♕d6 17.♖f2 ♗d7 18.♖g1 (all White's pieces are now transferred to the kingside and ready to attack) 18...♕e6 19.g5! hxg5 20.♗xg5 ♗c6 21.♖fg2.

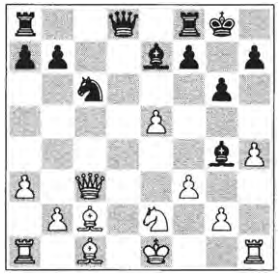
White has a terrible attack, while Black's counterplay is nowhere to be found. Black has taken a wrong strategic course at the start of the game and now loses without making any direct mistakes: 21...♔f8 22.♕d2 ♕h3 23.♗xg6! (removing the only defenders) 23...fxg6 24.♗xf6 gxf6 25.♘f4 ♕xf3 26.♘xg6+ ♔f7 27.♘h4 (the game is decided) 27...♕h5 28.♖g7+ ♔f8 29.♖xc7 ♕xh4 30.♕g2 ♕h8 31.♖g7 ♕h5 32.♕g3 and Black resigned, Sokolov-Brunner, Oakham 1988.

9. 0-0

Around the end of 1988 I played for the Yugoslav team in the Olympiad in Thessaloniki, where the game Knaak-Christiansen caught my attention. This original game continued 9.a3 ♗e7 10.♗c2 0-0 11.♕d3 g6

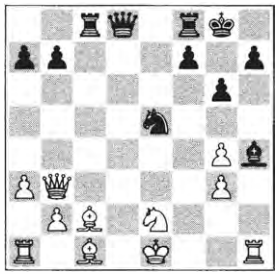
analysis diagram

12.h4!? (a very direct approach, useful for the reader to take note of – it can also be used in similar positions!. Black has to follow the old basic rule: a wing attack has to be countered in the centre!) 12...e5! (an immediate, principled reaction involving a sacrifice. The other possibility is 12...♘xc3 13.bxc3 e5, when White gets compensation for the sacrificed pawn after 14.♕g3 exd4 15.h5 ♗d6 16.♗f4 ♗xf4 17.♘xf4) 13.dxe5 ♘xc3 14.♕xc3 ♗g4 15.f3



analysis diagram

15...♖c8! (Black's play is energetic, in the spirit of the position. His bridges have already been burned with 12...e5! and to keep the initiative, he must be ready to sacrifice more) 16.fxg4 ♘xe5! (excellent play. Black breaks open the white king's position) 17.♕b3! (White is showing good nerves in defence. Taking the knight is dangerous, for example: 17.♕xe5 ♖e8!. White is two pieces up, but his king has nowhere to hide: 18.♕d4 ♗xh4+ 19.♔d1 ♕e7 20.♕e4 ♖cd8+ 21.♗d2 ♕c5! (less good is 21...♗g5 22.♕xe7 ♖xe7 23.♔e1 ♖xd2 24.♗d1 ♖xb2 25.♔f1 b5 26.♖h3 and White would disentangle his pieces) 22.b4 ♖xd2+ 23.♔xd2 ♕g5+ 24.♔d1 ♖xe4 25.♗xe4 ♕xg4 and due to White's exposed king, Black has ample compensation for the small material sacrifice) 17...♗xh4+ 18.g3



analysis diagram

18...♖xc2? (in his attempt to keep the initiative, Black sacrifices one piece too many. Correct was 18...♗g5! 19.0-0 (wrong is 19.♗f4? ♕a5+! 20.♘c3 ♘f3+ 21.♔f2 ♘d4 22.♕a4 ♕b6) 19...♗xc1 20.♖axc1 ♕d2 21.♘f4 ♘xg4 22.♘g2 ♕d4+ 23.♔h1 ♘f2+ 24.♔h2 ♘g4+ 25.♔h1 ♘f2+ and a draw could have been the outcome of this exciting game. Now it soon becomes obvious that the tables are turning in White's favour) 19.♕xc2 ♘d3+ 20.♔f1 ♕d5 21.♘g1! (only move) 21...♖e8 22.♗h6! (weaving a mating net around the black king) 22...♗xg3 23.♖d1 ♕xh1 24.♕xd3 ♕h2 25.♕e2! and White soon won.

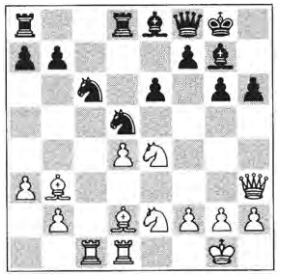
During the Olympiad in Thessaloniki the general opinion among grandmasters had been formed that Christiansen's sacrifice was incorrect, so a couple of months later when I played in Wijk aan Zee against Van der Wiel (a reasonably good player at the time) I wanted to repeat Knaak's idea. However, after 9.a3 Black played 9...♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♗e7 and now, for some reason, instead of playing 11.♗c2, trying after 11...0-0 to copy the above-mentioned game with 12.♕d3 g6 13.h4, I played 11.♗e4 and after 11...0-0 12.♕d3 h6 committed an incredible positional blunder playing the coffee-house move 13.f4?. Black easily punished this 'aggressive' approach with 13...♕c7 14.♖b1 ♘a5 15.0-0 f5! 16.♗f3 and now Black executed an instructive pawn sacrifice with 16...♕c4! 17.♕xc4 ♘xc4 18.♗xb7 ♖b8 19.♗xc8 ♖fxc8. The dominant knight on c4 is worth much more than a pawn. I had to suffer to finally make a draw in the ending.

9. ... ♘d5-f6

A slightly odd-looking move. Black removes his knight from the centre in order to better protect his kingside and also not to allow Black to timely take on d5.

A logical continuation – and the main line – is 9...0-0 and after the logical sequence 10.♗c2 ♖e8 11.♕d3 g6 12.♖d1 ♗f8 13.♕f3 ♗g7 14.♘e4 h6, a rather complex battle begins. Black's knight on d5 is well placed and his king is also reasonably safe, but White has a little more space and Black has a slight problem to develop his queenside.

In the same tournament a couple of rounds later, I had a game with Abramovic, which continued 15.♗d2 ♕e7 16.♗b3 ♗d7 17.♕g3 ♖ed8 18.a3 ♗e8 19.♕h3! (preparing a tactical trap) 19...♕f8 20.♖ac1.



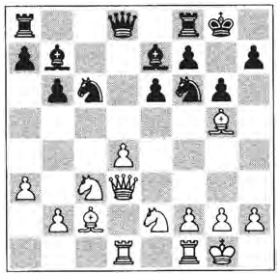
analysis diagram

The position is objectively approximately equal, but here Black blundered, playing the 'logical' 20...♖ac8? and missing the pin: 21.♗xd5! exd5 22.♗b4 and White won after 22...♗d7 23.♗xf8 ♗xh3 24.♗xg7 dxe4 (24...♔xg7 loses a pawn after 25.♘c5) 25.♗f6 ♖d6 26.d5 ♘a5 27.♗e7 ♖xc1 28.♖xc1.

10. ♗d3-c2 ♗b4-e7

In case of 10...♗d6? Black would likely be a tempo down compared to the game after 11.♗g5! 0-0 (11...♗xh2+? never works due to 12.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 13.♔g3 ♕xg5 14.f4 ♕h5 15.♖h1 and White wins a piece) 12.a3, with 13.♕d3 to follow.

11. a2-a3 0-0
12. ♕d1-d3 b7-b6
13. ♗c1-g5 g7-g6
14. ♖a1-d1 ♗c8-b7

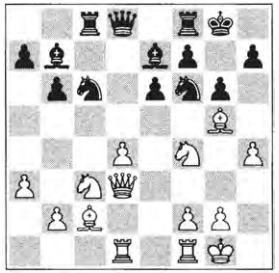


15. h2-h4

Some years later, at the Moscow Olympiad 1994, Cebalo had a game against Tisdall which continued 15.♕h3 (very often the queen is well placed on this natural square) 15...♖c8 16.♖fe1 ♘a5 17.♘f4! (increasing the pressure and creating tactical possibilities like the d4-d5 break or the sacrifice ♘xe6) 17...♘d5 (in the event of 17...♘c4 Black has to worry about 18.♗b3 (18.d5 ♘xd5 19.♘xe6 also looks dangerous) and now 18...♘xb2? loses to 19.♖b1! (in case of the more logical 19.♖d2 Black has a beautiful tactical solution in 19...♘h5! 20.♘xe6 ♗xg5 21.♘xd8 ♗xd2) 19...♕xd4 (19...♗xa3 fails to 20.♘b5; 19...♘h5?? loses immediately to 20.♘xe6) 20.♘xe6! ♕xc3 21.♕xc3 ♖xc3 22.♘xf8 and White has a winning endgame) 18.♗xe7 ♘xe7 (18...♘xf4? is bad due to 19.♕h4 ♕c7 20.♗f6) 19.♗e4! (by exchanging the light-

squared bishops White prepares the d4-d5 break) 19...♗xe4 20.♘xe4 ♘f5 21.d5! e5 22.♘h5! f6 23.d6 and White soon had a winning advantage.

15. ... ♖a8-c8
16. ♘e2-f4



16. ... ♘f6-d5?

Black is obviously getting nervous about the d4-d5 break and is taking radical measures to prevent it. After the text, however, the pawn structure in the centre is going to transform from an isolated pawn centre to a symmetrical one where White, due to his more active bishop, his e-file control and his attacking possibilities on the kingside, will have a clear advantage.

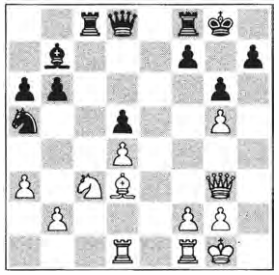
It is very important that the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, so that White can later build on the e5-square domination (soon to be seen!). It was necessary for Black to keep active counterplay with 16...♘a5! with 17...♘c4 to follow, which was likely to have been Cebalo's plan when he repeated the line against Tisdall six years later.

17. ♘f4xd5 ♗e7xg5
18. h4xg5 e6xd5
19. ♕d3-g3 ♘c6-a5
20. ♗c2-d3!

Preventing Black's only way of counterplay.

20. ... a7-a6

If 20...♘c4, then 21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 (or 21...dxc4 22.d5) 22.♖fe1 and White is clearly better, as the black bishop on b7 is very passive.



21. f2-f4!

Now, in order to stop the mating attack, Black will have to compromise his pawn structure.

21. ... ♕d8-d6
22. ♕g3-h4 f7-f5

Otherwise f4-f5, with devastating effect.

23. ♖f1-e1

It's time to take possession of the e-file.

23. ... ♘a5-c6
24. ♗d3-b1!

The bishop will be more effective on the a2-g8 diagonal.

24. ... ♘c6-d8
25. ♖e1-e3

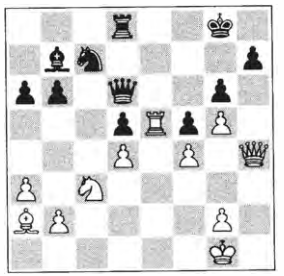
25.♗a2 is also strong.

25. ... ♘d8-e6
26. ♖e3-e5

Due to the fact that the dark-squared bishops are gone, the white rook will stay on e5 'forever'.

26. ... ♖f8-e8
27. ♖d1-e1 ♘e6-c7
28. ♗b1-a2 ♖e8xe5
29. ♖e1xe5 ♖c8-d8

Now the time has come to open up the black kingside.



30. g2-g4! ♕d6-f8

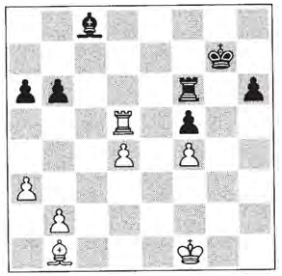
30...fxg4? loses to 31.♘e4.

31. g4xf5 g6xf5
32. ♗a2-b1 ♗b7-c8
33. g5-g6! h7-h6
34. ♔g1-f1?

A very easy win was 34.♗xf5! ♖d6 35.♗c2 ♖f6 36.f5.

34. ... ♖d8-d6
35. g6-g7 ♕f8-f6
36. ♕h4xf6 ♖d6xf6
37. ♘c3xd5 ♘c7xd5
38. ♖e5xd5 ♔g8xg7

White has not made the best of his attack and we have moved on to the endgame. However, due to his better bishop, strong passed d-pawn and Black's weakness on f5, White is still on top.



39. ♔f1-f2 ♖f6-c6
40. ♖d5-d8! ♔g7-f6
41. d4-d5 ♖c6-c5
42. ♔f2-e3!

White's centralized king will decide the battle.

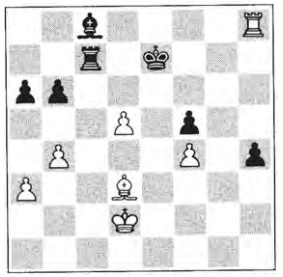
42. ... h6-h5
43. ♗b1-d3

Getting ready to chase away the black rook.

43. ... h5-h4

Or 43...♔e7 44.♖h8.

44. b2-b4 ♖c5-c1
45. ♔e3-d2 ♔f6-e7
46. ♖d8-h8 ♖c1-c7



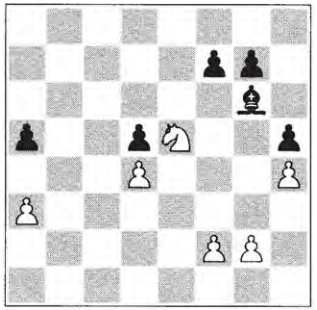
47. ♔d2-e3!

Back to the centre.

47. ... ♗c8-b7
48. ♔e3-d4 ♖c7-d7
49. ♖h8-h7+ ♔e7-d8
50. ♖h7xd7+ ♔d8xd7
51. ♔d4-e5! ♔d7-d8
52. ♗d3xf5 ♗b7-c8
53. ♗f5xc8 ♔d8xc8
54. ♔e5-e4

Black resigned.

Structure 2.6



In the central d4/d5 pawn symmetry, often resulting from an isolated pawn position, Black's light-squared bishop is (due to the fact that Black's pawn is on a light square – d5) almost per definition inferior to the white light-squared bishop or a knight. Here are two relatively simple examples that highlight Black's problems.

The first example is a game that decided the 1986 World Championship match, while the second is an example from my own practice.

QO 10.15(D55) **GAME 25**

Garry Kasparov

Anatoly Karpov

London/Leningrad Wch m 1986 (22)

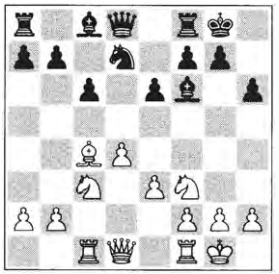
1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
5.	**♗c1-g5**	**h7-h6**
6.	**♗g5xf6**	

White gives up his bishop pair in order to gain time for quick development. The other main move, 6.♗h4, featured in the game Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky (Game 28), further on in this chapter.

6.	**...**	**♗e7xf6**
7.	**e2-e3**	**0-0**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	**c7-c6**
9.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-d7**

Here we have a well-known pawn structure, which is also often seen in the Moscow Variation of the Slav. The advantage for Black lies in the fact that his dark-squared bishop is already well-placed and there is no need for him to waste extra tempi on queen moves.

10.	**0-0**	**d5xc4**
11.	**♗d3xc4**	



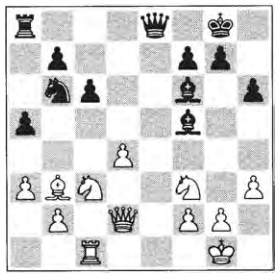
11.	**...**	**e6-e5**

This pawn break is a typical way for Black to liberate himself and prepare the development of his bishop on c8. An isolated pawn position is about to arise, the white trump being a strong bishop, which will be well-placed on b3 and will not be easy for Black to neutralize.

12.	**h2-h3**	**e5xd4**
13.	**e3xd4**	**♘d7-b6**
14.	**♗c4-b3**	**♗c8-f5**
15.	**♖f1-e1**	**a7-a5**
16.	**a2-a3**	**♖f8-e8**

White has, due to his well-placed bishop on b3, certain pressure and also a threat: the ♘f3-e5 jump. Therefore it is advisable for Black to exchange a few pieces.

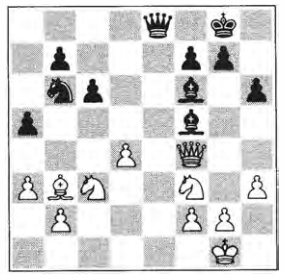
17.	**♖e1xe8+**	**♕d8xe8**
18.	**♕d1-d2**	



18.	**...**	**♘b6-d7?!**

Black indeed wants to cover the e5-square.

After this game black players started to look for an improvement and eventually they found one in 18...♕d7!, the idea being that after 19.♖e1 ♖e8 20.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 21.♕f4, which seems good for White, Black has an excellent tactical resource found by Paul van der Sterren:

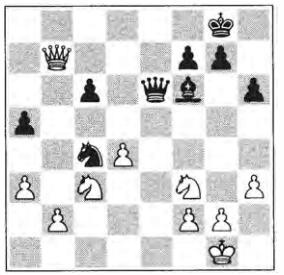


analysis diagram

21...♗e6! 22.♗xe6 ♕xe6 and now:

A) 23.♕b8+ ♕c8 24.♕a7 has been tried, but this leads to a forced draw: 24...♘c4 25.♕c5 ♕e6 (25...♘xb2 should also lead to a draw after 26.♘e4 ♗d8! (26...♕e6 27.♘xf6+ gxf6 28.♕xa5 is slightly better for White) 27.♕c2 ♕f5 28.♕xb2 ♕xe4 29.♕xb7 ♗f6, for example 30.♕a8+ ♔h7 31.♕xa5 ♗xd4 32.♘xd4 ♕xd4 33.♕f5+ ♔g8 34.♕c8+ ♔h7 35.♕xc6 ♕a1+ 36.♔h2 ♕xa3) 26.d5 cxd5 27.♘xd5 ♘xb2 28.♕xa5 ♘c4 29.♕a8+ ♔h7 30.♕xb7 ♘xa3 31.♕b3 ♗e7 and a draw was soon agreed in Ftacnik-H. Olafsson, New York Open 1987. This line illustrates the importance of inserting 15...a5 16.a3, as Van der Sterren always stressed – if Black omits this he simply loses the pawn on a7;

B) 23.♕c7 ♘c4 24.♕xb7



analysis diagram

24...♗xd4! – the point of Black's idea. White has nothing better than to force a draw with 25.♘xd4 (trying to be 'smart' with 25.♕b8+?! ♔h7 26.♘xd4 doesn't help: 26...♕e1+ 27.♔h2 ♕xf2! (not 27...♘d2? 28.h4! ♕xf2 29.♕e5) and White has to find the only way to draw with 28.♕c8! (Black wins in case of 28.♘de2? ♘e3 29.♘f4 g5! 30.♘ce2 gxf4 31.♘xf4 ♘f1+ 32.♔h1 ♕g3! 33.♔g1 ♘d2! (the threat is 34...♘f3, mating) 34.♔h1 ♘e4! 35.♔g1 (otherwise 35...♘f2-h3) 35...♘g5! 36.♔h1 ♘e6 and Black wins a piece) 28...♕xd4 29.♕f5+ ♔g8 30.♕c8+) 25...♕e1+ 26.♔h2 ♕e5+ 27.g3 ♕xd4 28.♕c8+ ♔h7 29.♕f5+ ♔g8 30.♕c8+ and a number of games have ended in a draw by this perpetual check, including one of my own against Van der Sterren, Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1994.

My preparation for this game was a rather embarrassing story. I entered this line not knowing it to be a forced draw and spent almost all of my time, while it took my opponent just a few minutes. After the game I found out that the whole line was a well-known draw, finding plenty of games with it, including a couple of Van der Sterren's!

19. ♕d2-f4!

Securing a powerful position for the white bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal, with long-term pressure on the f7 weakness.

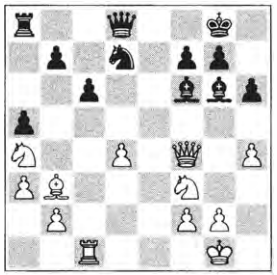
19. ... ♗f5-g6

Opposing White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal with 19...♗e6 would not solve Black's problems. White would keep the initiative with 20.♖e1 ♘f8 (the tactic 20...♗e5 does not help, since after 21.dxe5 ♗xb3 22.♘e4 the white knight will take up a powerful post on d6) 21.d5 cxd5 22.♘xd5.

20. h3-h4 ♕e8-d8

21. ♘c3-a4

Black has the bishop pair and a healthy pawn structure. However, White can successfully target the only weakness in Black's camp (f7) and his pieces are coordinating very well, keeping the pressure.



21. ... h6-h5

In general not an easy move to play. However, White will have the initiative in the case of 21...♖c8 22.♕g4, or 21...♘b6 22.♕g4! ♗h7 (other moves do not neutralize White's initiative either: 22...♔h8 23.h5 ♗h7 24.♘c5, or 22...♘d5 23.h5 ♗h7 24.♘e5) 23.♘c5.

22. ♖c1-e1

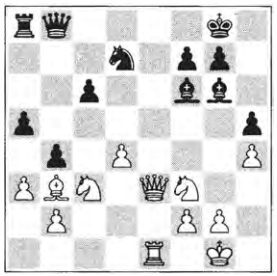
Control of the e-file is important.

22. ... b7-b5

Trying to put up an active defence.

23. ♘a4-c3 ♕d8-b8

24. ♕f4-e3 b5-b4



25. ♘c3-e4! b4xa3

25...♗xe4 26.♕xe4 bxa3 loses a pawn after 27.♕xc6! ♖a7 (27...axb2? would blunder a piece due to 28.♕d5! ♕f8 29.♕xd7) 28.♕d5 ♘f8 (even worse for Black is 28...♘b6 29.♕b5 ♔f8 30.bxa3) 29.bxa3 and White is a clear pawn up, while still targeting the f7 weakness and keeping the initiative.

26. ♘e4xf6+ ♘d7xf6

27. b2xa3

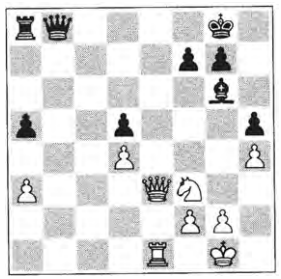
White threatens ♘f3-e5, further hitting the f7 weakness, so Black is forced to shut off the white bishop.

27. ... ♘f6-d5

28. ♗b3xd5 c6xd5

In itself this looks like a reasonable deal for Black. A lot of pieces have been exchanged, the pawn structure is totally symmetrical and it seems as if Black is about to equalize. However, his troubles are far from over – in fact they are just about to begin. White gets a monster knight on e5, which is clearly superior to Black's virtually useless bishop.

It is important to note that the assessment of this position would have been very much different if Black had had the time for ...f7-f6, keeping the white knight from its dominant post.



29. ♘f3-e5 ♕b8-d8

30. ♕e3-f3 ♖a8-a6

31. ♖e1-c1!

The rook has done its job on the e-file and now the c-file is the one to control – and to penetrate.

31. ... ♔g8-h7

32. ♕f3-h3! ♖a6-b6

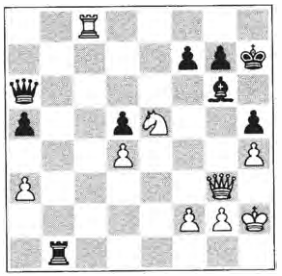
33. ♖c1-c8 ♕d8-d6

34. ♕h3-g3

White has perfect piece coordination and Black is in terrible trouble. Kasparov's execution is excellent.

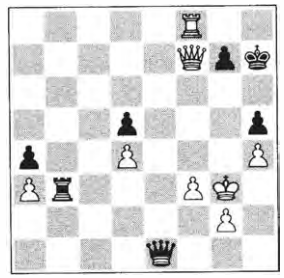
34. ... a5-a4

Trying to become active with 34...♖b1+ 35.♔h2 ♕a6 would result in a probably lost endgame:



analysis diagram

36.♖f8! ♕f1 37.♕f3 ♕h1+ 38.♔g3 a4 (in the case of 38...♕d1 39.♕xd5 ♕b3+ 40.♕xb3 ♖xb3+ 41.f3 White's d-passer is very strong) 39.♘xf7! ♗xf7 40.♕xf7 ♖b3+ 41.f3 ♕e1+

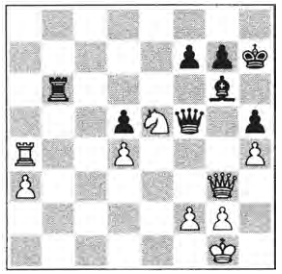


analysis diagram

42.♔f4! ♕xh4+ (42...♕d2+ loses to 43.♔f5 ♕c2+ 44.♔g5 ♕xg2+

45.♔xh5 with ♕g8 and mate next) 43.♔f5 ♕f6+ 44.♕xf6 gxf6 45.♖f7+! ♔g8 46.♖a7 ♖xa3 47.♔g6 ♔f8 48.♔xf6 ♔e8 49.♔e6.

35. ♖c8-a8 ♕d6-e6
36. ♖a8xa4 ♕e6-f5



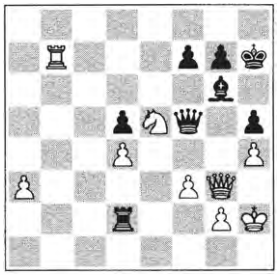
37. ♖a4-a7!

Preparing a beautiful mating net, as will soon become apparent.

37. ... ♖b6-b1+
38. ♔g1-h2 ♖b1-c1
39. ♖a7-b7

Preventing 39...♕b1.

39. ... ♖c1-c2
40. f2-f3 ♖c2-d2



41. ♘e5-d7!

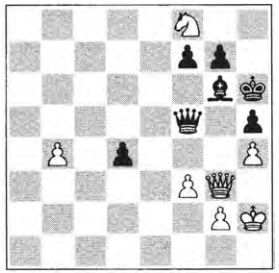
Executing the plan started with 37.♖a7!.

41. ... ♖d2xd4
42. ♘d7-f8+ ♔h7-h6

Or 42...♔g8? 43.♖b8. Black's king is now in a mating net and after the d4 rook gets exchanged, Black will be helpless against the mating threats on the c1-h6 diagonal.

43. ♖b7-b4! ♖d4-c4

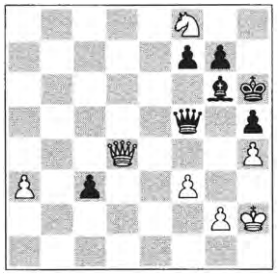
Black gets mated in a nice variation after 43...♖xb4 44.axb4 d4



analysis diagram

45.b5! (the black queen is stuck on f5, having to defend against the mate on f4) 45...d3 46.b6 d2 47.b7 d1♕ 48.b8♕ ♕d2 (only move to prevent the mate on f4) 49.♘xg6 ♕xg6 50.♕h8+ ♕h7 51.♕gxg7 mate.

44. ♖b4xc4 d5xc4
45. ♕g3-d6! c4-c3
46. ♕d6-d4! 1-0



Total domination. After Black's only move to prevent mate on the c1-h6 diagonal, 46...♗h7, probably the easiest for White is to take 47.♕xc3, combining mate threats with the advance of the a-pawn.

QO 16.12 (D31) **GAME 26**
Ivan Sokolov
Lars Schandorff
Reykjavik 2001 (5)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
4. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
5. ♕d1-c2!?

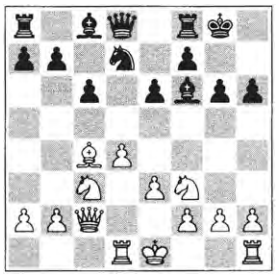
An interesting move, which has been tried many times by a lot of top players. In general, with this move order White tries to get a favourable version of a different type of known lines in the Queen's Gambit Declined.

5. ... ♘b8-a6

In the above-mentioned other QGD lines, *the text move is a sideline that* never looked logical to me. Let me give a short introduction to the way play may continue in the main lines:

A) 5...dxc4 6.e4 ♘c6 7.e5 ♘b4 8.♕b1 ♘fd5 9.♗xc4 and a position has been reached that, as regards pawn structure, is similar to the 3.e4 line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, with slightly better chances for White;

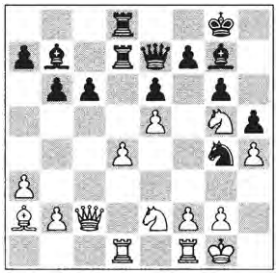
B) 5...0-0 6.♗g5 h6 (6...c5 7.dxc5 dxc4 8.e4 ♕a5 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♗xc4 ♘xc3 11.0-0 ♕xc5 12.♕xc3 was subject to discussion in the World Championship match Kasparov-Karpov, Sevilla 1987) 7.♗xf6 ♗xf6 8.♖d1 g6 9.e3 c6 10.♗d3 dxc4 11.♗xc4 ♘d7. Now we get what I was talking about. The pawn structure is identical to that in the well-known Tartakower/Makogonov line (see Kasparov-Karpov, Game 25), with the difference that the white rook is better placed on d1 than on the customary c1, giving White a favourable version of a known line. In Kramnik-Short, Dortmund 1995, White played a beautiful, instructive game showing all the pros of White's set-up:



analysis diagram

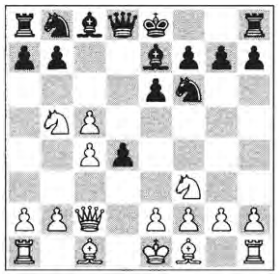
12.h4! ♕e7 13.a3! (two rook-pawn moves on both flanks are part of a well-conceived attacking plan) *13...♗g7 14.♗a2 b6 15.♗b1 h5?!* (giving away the very important g5-square is – in a higher sense – going to cost Black the game. Short was probably better advised to keep cool and opt for 15...♖d8 16.h5 g5 17.♕h7+ ♔f8 18.♘e4 f5! (not 18...♘f6? 19.♘xf6 ♕xf6 20.♘e5 and White wins: 20...♗b7 21.♘g4 ♕e7 22.♘xh6) 19.♘g3 c5!, creating counterplay) 16.0-0 ♗b7 17.♘g5 (putting a monster on g5) 17...♖fd8 18.♗a2 ♘f6?! (18...♘f8, keeping the e6/g6 weaknesses under control, was definitely a move to consider) 19.e4 ♘g4 (the

knight does very little on this 'active' post) 20.e5 ♖d7 21.♘e2! (setting the stage for a tactical execution) 21...♖ad8



analysis diagram

22.♗xe6! fxe6 23.♕xg6 ♘xe5 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♘f4, Black resigned. Given the fact that White loses some time making a queen move relatively early in the game, the most principled response for Black here is, in my opinion, to take immediate action in the centre with 5...c5! 6.dxc5 d4. Let me give one instructive example of how play may continue in that event: 7.♘b5



analysis diagram

7...e5! 8.♘xe5 a6! 9.♘a3 (9.♘d6+?? is a terrible blunder due to 9...♗xd6 10.cxd6 ♕a5+, winning a piece) 9...0-0 (for the pawns Black has a massive lead in development) 10.g3 (or 10.♘d3 ♗f5) 10...♕a5+ 11.♗d2 ♕xc5 12.♘d3 ♕c6 13.♖g1 ♗f5 14.♗g2 ♕c8. Black had strong compensation and went on to win in Khalifman-Topalov, FIDE Grand Prix, Dubai 2001.

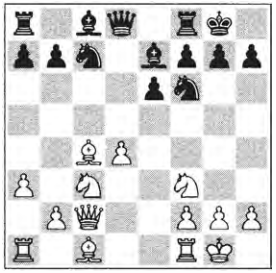
6. a2-a3!

Simple and strong, eliminating Black's main idea (...♘a6-b4 with tempo). After other moves Black would get active play related to ♘a6-b4, justifying his previous move, for example:

A) 6.♗g5 ♘b4 7.♕b1 c5! 8.dxc5 d4 9.a3 ♘c6 10.♘e4 ♘xe4 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 12.♕xe4 ♕xc5 with excellent play for Black;

B) 6.g3 ♘b4 7.♕b1 dxc4 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖b8 10.a3 ♘c6 11.♖d1 ♘a5 and in this Catalan-type position Black has a good game.

6.	**...**	**c7-c5**
7.	**e2-e3**	**c5xd4**
8.	**e3xd4**	**d5xc4**
9.	**♗f1xc4**	**0-0**
10.	**0-0**	**♘a6-c7**



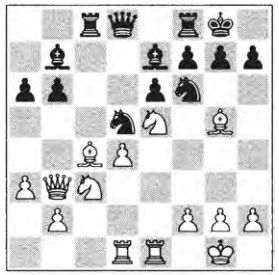
11. ♗c1-g5

A new plan at the time. I thought that White should have a reasonably good version of the classical type of isolated pawn-position here if he continues with normal piece development, due to the fact that Black has good control of the d5-square, but no real counterplay. The direct attack against the black king,

which has also been tried already, is not that dangerous after all, for instance: 11.♖d1 b6 12.♘e5 ♗b7 13.♖d3 b5! (creating immediate counterplay) 14.♗a2 a5! 15.♗g5 b4 16.♖h3 ♘ce8! (one of the advantages of having the knight on c7) 17.♘b5 (the 'aggressive' 17.♘g4 is easily parried by 17...g6) 17...♖c8 18.♕e2 ♘e4 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♘a7 ♖c7 21.♘b5 ♖c8 22.♘a7 ♖c7 23.♘b5 draw, Topalov-Karpov, Dos Hermanas 1999.

11.	**...**	**b7-b6**
12.	**♖a1-d1**	**♗c8-b7**
13.	**♘f3-e5**	**♘c7-d5**
14.	**♖f1-e1**	**♖a8-c8**
15.	**♕c2-b3**	**a7-a6**

Black is ready to start kicking back the white pieces with ...b6-b5, so it is time for White to change the pawn structure.



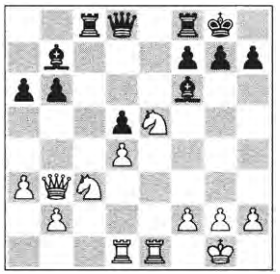
16. ♗g5xf6! ♗e7xf6

Forced. 16...♘xf6? loses to 17.d5! exd5 18.♘xd5 ♗c5 (18...♘xd5 loses after 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♕c7 21.♖d7 ♕c5 22.♘d3) 19.♘f4 ♕c7 20.♖d7! ♘xd7 21.♗xf7+ ♔h8 22.♘fg6+ hxg6 23.♕h3 mate.

17. ♗c4xd5 e6xd5

White would also have a slightly better game after 17...♗xd5 18.♘xd5 exd5 19.♘g4 (Black would probably equalize after 19.♕a4 ♗xe5! (not 19...♕d6? 20.♕xa6 ♖c2 21.♖e2, or 19...a5? 20.♘d7) 20.dxe5 a5 21.♖d4 ♖c5 22.♕d1 ♕a8! (not 22...♕d7 23.b4 axb4 24.axb4 ♖b5 and the rook is stranded on b5) 23.f4 (or 23.b4 axb4 24.axb4 ♖c4) 23...♕c6! 24.f5 ♖c2 with counterplay) 19...♖c4 20.♘e3 ♖xd4 21.♘xd5 ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 b5.

It could well be that 17...♗xd5 was a better option for Black.



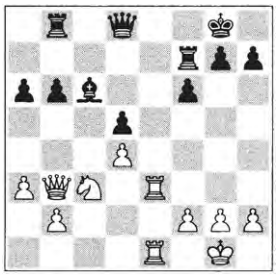
18.	**♘c3-a4!**	**♗f6xe5**
19.	**♖e1xe5!**	

It is important to keep the d4/d5 structure intact, in which Black's b7 bishop is closed in.

19.	**...**	**♗b7-c6**
20.	**♘a4-c3**	**f7-f6**
21.	**♖e5-e3**	

White controls the e-file, while Black is saddled with a passive light-squared bishop and weak queenside pawns.

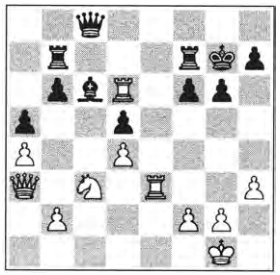
21.	**...**	**♖f8-f7**
22.	**♖d1-e1**	**♖c8-b8**



23. ♖e3-e6! ♕d8-d7
24. h2-h3 g7-g6
25. ♕b3-b4

Targeting the weak dark squares in Black's camp.

25. ... ♔g8-g7
26. a3-a4 ♖b8-b7
27. ♖e6-d6 a6-a5
28. ♕b4-a3 ♕d7-c8
29. ♖e1-e6 ♗c6-d7
30. ♖e6-e3 ♗d7-c6



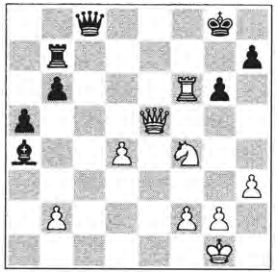
31. ♘c3-e2!

Time to improve the knight.

31. ... ♖f7-d7
32. ♘e2-f4

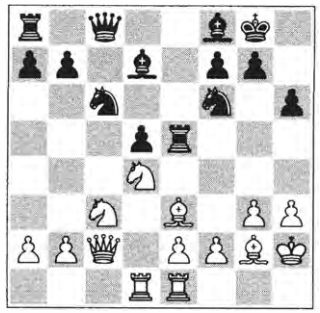
White has achieved total domination and the black king is coming under direct attack. The game is over.

32. ... ♔g7-f7
33. ♖e3-e6! ♖d7xd6
34. ♕a3xd6 ♗c6xa4
35. ♖e6xf6+ ♔f7-g8
36. ♕d6xd5+ ♔g8-g7
37. ♕d5-e5 ♔g7-g8



38. ♘f4xg6 ♕c8-c1+
39. ♔g1-h2 h7xg6
40. ♖f6xg6+ ♔g8-f8
41. ♕e5-h8+ ♔f8-e7
42. ♕h8-h7+ ♔e7-d8
43. ♕h7xb7 1-0

Structure 2.7



Original rook transfer - kingside attack

One more example emerges from the main line of the Tarrasch Defence. Illescas Cordoba shows a very original plan of attack for the side with the isolated pawn.

TD 4.16 (D34) **GAME 27**

Alexander Beliavsky
Miguel Illescas Cordoba
Linares 1990 (2)

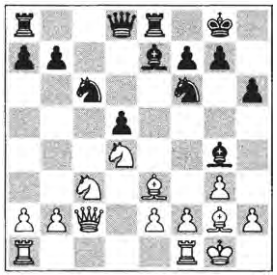
1. d2-d4 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 e7-e6
3. ♘b1-c3 c7-c5
4. c4xd5 e6xd5
5. ♘g1-f3 ♘b8-c6
6. g2-g3 ♘g8-f6
7. ♗f1-g2 ♗f8-e7
8. 0-0 0-0
9. ♗c1-g5 c5xd4
10. ♘f3xd4 h7-h6
11. ♗g5-e3 ♖f8-e8

As usual, Illescas plays the main move. As explained in Petrosian-Spassky (Game 23), 11...♗g4 is definitely worth analysing.

12. ♕d1-c2

A sideline that Beliavsky has experimented with on a number of occasions.

12. ... ♗c8-g4

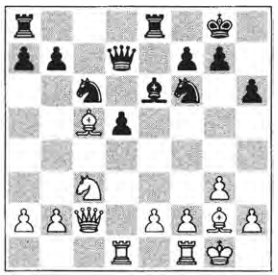


13. h2-h3

The first time, Beliavsky opted for 12.♕c2 in his well-known 1983 Candidates' match against none other than Garry Kasparov. Their sixth game continued 13.♖fd1 ♗f8 (invariably a useful move here) 14.♖ac1 ♖c8 15.♘xc6 (a common plan, already shown in previous examples like Kramnik-Illescas, Kasparov-Illescas, Sokolov-T.L.Petrosian, etc.) 15...bxc6 16.♗d4 ♗b4 (hitting the only white weakness, the e2 pawn, Black wants to create counterplay. However, he also had a standard plan at his disposal: 16...♘d7, with good play) 17.♖d2 ♕e7 (17...♘d7? would now be a blunder due to 18.♗xg7! ♔xg7 19.♖d4) 18.a3 ♗a5 19.b4 ♗b6 20.e3 ♕e6 (preparing ...c6-c5) 21.♕b2 ♗xd4 22.♖xd4 c5 23.bxc5 ♖xc5 with equal play.

Another option that Beliavsky has also experimented with is 13.♖ad1 ♕d7 (the regular move 13...♗f8 certainly comes into consideration) and:

A) If White now tries to immediately target the d5 pawn with 14.♘b3, Black gets good, dynamic play after 14...♗e6 15.♘c5 ♗xc5 16.♗xc5.

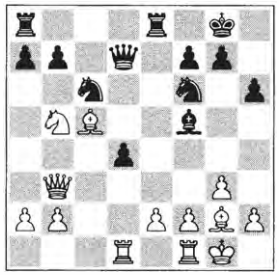


analysis diagram

White now has the bishop pair, combined with Black's potential isolated d5 pawn weakness. This pawn, however, could also become an asset, creating a lot of tactical possibilities for Black, for example after 16...d4! and now:

A1) 17.♕a4 ♖ab8! 18.♗xc6 (18.♗xd4? is a blunder due to 18...b5 19.♗xc6 (19.♘xb5? ♘xd4) 19...♕xc6 20.♕b4 ♗h3) 18...♕xc6 19.♕xc6 bxc6 20.♗xd4 ♖xb2 with about equal chances;

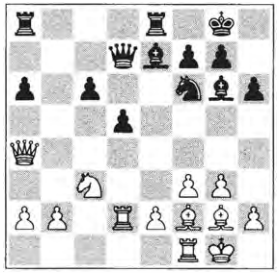
A2) 17.♘b5 ♗f5 18.♕b3



analysis diagram

18...d3! 19.exd3 ♗e6 20.♕a3 ♗h3 and Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn;

B) 14.f3 ♗h5 15.♗f2 ♗g6 16.♕a4 a6 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♖d2



analysis diagram

18...♕e6! (preparing a standard knight transfer) 19.♖c1 ♘d7 and Black's pieces are harmoniously developed, while White is not able to target Black's potential weaknesses effectively. Black is slightly better, Beliavsky-T.L. Petrosian, Moscow Aeroflot 2005.

13. ... ♗g4-d7

Better and more dynamic than 13...♗e6.

14. ♖a1-d1

14.♖fd1 would move the kingside rook away from its king and might allow some classic tactics here after 14...♗f8 15.♘xd5?! ♘xd5 16.♗xd5: 16...♖xe3! (this blow is worth remembering – it works most of the time!) 17.♗xc6 (or 17.fxe3 ♕g5) 17...bxc6 18.fxe3 ♕g5 with a strong initiative.

14. ... ♕d8-c8!

15. ♔g1-h2 ♗e7-f8

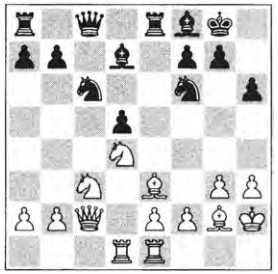
A standard plan, but this time it also prepares an unusual attacking method.

16. ♖f1-e1?!

In the event of 16.♘xc6 bxc6 17.♗d4, Black gets good play with 17...♘h7!, threatening to start rolling his central pawns.

Black has an approximately equal game after 16.♘xd5!? ♘xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗xh3 18.♖fe1 ♘e5! (18...♗b4? is wrong due to 19.♕b3) 19.♕xc8 ♗xc8 20.♔g1 ♘g4 21.♗c1 (if 21.♗d2, 21...♖d8! 22.e4 ♘f6 23.♗a5 ♖e8) 21...♗c5.

Now Black can develop his attack nicely.



16. ... ♖e8-e5!

This rook manoeuvre can also be used in similar positions, which is the main reason that I have selected this game for the book.

17. ♖e1-h1□

White was probably rather surprised by Black's last move and anyhow, it is not easy to find a good defence. For example:

A) 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♗d4? loses to 18...♖h5 19.♗xf6 ♗xh3 20.♗h4 (or 20.♗f3 ♗g2+) 20...♖xh4! 21.gxh4 ♗d6+ and Black soon delivers mate.

B) The other defensive option was 17.♘f3 ♖h5 (here, the classic exchange sacrifice 17...♖xe3 again comes into consideration, with strong compensation after 18.fxe3 ♕b8! 19.e4 ♘h5) 18.♘h4 and now:

B1) 18...g5? does not work due to 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♗xd5;

B2) White has some compensation for the exchange after 18...d4 19.♗xd4 ♘xd4 20.♖xd4 g5 21.♖xd7! ♕xd7 22.♖d1 ♕c7 23.♘f5;

B3) 18...♗d6? is a blunder due to 19.♘xd5 ♘xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xd5 21.♗xd5 ♗xh3 22.♗xf7+;

B4) 18...♘b4 19.♕b3 ♗d6 20.f4 a5, and in this highly unusual position Black's chances should be preferred.

17. ... ♖e5-h5!

18. ♔h2-g1 ♗d7xh3

19. ♗g2-f3

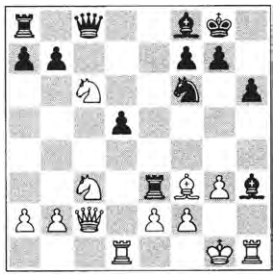
The point of White's defence.

19. ... ♖h5-e5

19...♗g4 is no more than equal after 20.♖xh5 ♗xh5 21.♗xh5 ♘xh5 22.♘f3; 19...♘g4!? was interesting.

20. ♘d4xc6 b7xc6

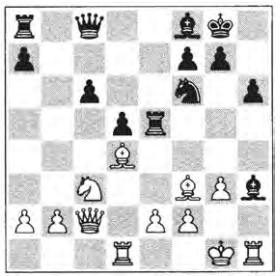
In the case of the classic exchange sacrifice 20...♖xe3, White now has...



analysis diagram

21.♘xd5! (21.fxe3 bxc6 would, as usual, be very good for Black) 21...♘xd5 22.♗xd5 with a messy position, since 22...bxc6? is bad due to 23.♕xc6.

21. ♗e3-d4



21. ... ♗h3-f5!

Other moves, like 21...♖g5, would allow White to damage Black's kingside pawn structure and create counterplay with 22.♗xf6 gxf6 23.e4! d4 24.♘e2 c5 25.♘f4.

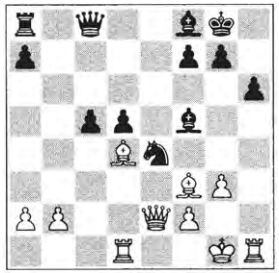
22. e2-e4 ♖e5xe4

Also good was 22...dxe4 23.♗xe5 exf3 24.♕d2 ♘g4 and with the white rook horribly misplaced on h1, Black is clearly better.

23. ♘c3xe4 ♘f6xe4

Black has two pawns for the exchange and clear domination. The white rook will remain misplaced on h1 for quite some time.

24. ♕c2-e2 c6-c5?



A tactical blunder. Any regular move, like 24...♕e6 for instance, would have maintained a clear advantage.

25. ♗d4-e3?

White lets the opportunity 25.♗xg7!! slip: 25...♗xg7 26.♖xd5 ♕e6 27.♖xf5 ♕xf5 28.♗xe4 ♕e6 29.♕f3 ♖d8 30.♖h5 with the better game.

25. ... ♕c8-e6

Black is again firmly in control.

26. ♔g1-g2 d5-d4

26...♖e8 is also good.

27. ♗e3-c1 ♖a8-e8

28. ♕e2-b5 a7-a6

29. ♕b5-b7

Trying to get some play.

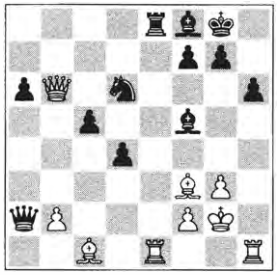
29. ... ♕e6xa2

30. ♖d1-e1!

30.♖he1? loses to 30...♖e7! 31.♕a8 ♕b3!.

30. ... ♘e4-d6

31. ♕b7-b6



31. ... ♖e8-c8?

It was correct to return one pawn and coordinate his pieces with 31...♗e4! 32.♕xc5 ♕a4, and Black is better.

32. ♗c1-f4!

Now White has created counterplay.

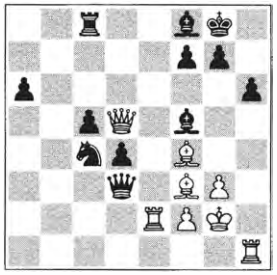
32. ... ♘d6-c4

33. ♕b6-b7 ♕a2xb2

34. ♕b7-d5 ♕b2-c2

35. ♖e1-e2 ♘c4-b6

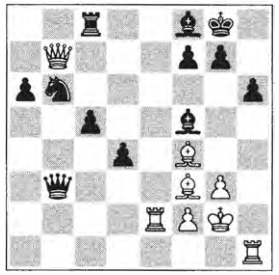
White has serious threats. In the case of 35...♕d3...



analysis diagram

... there is 36.g4! ♗g6 37.♕b7 ♖d8 38.♕c7, and the rook has no squares left.

36. ♕d5-b7 ♕c2-b3



37. ♖h1-e1?

After having created a mess, White does not take his chance. After 37.♗c1! Black would have had to give back material with 37...♗c2 38.♖xc2 ♕xc2 39.♕xb6 and a draw is the likely outcome.

37. ... ♕b3-b5

38. ♗f4-c1

One move too late. The black queen is now defended and White is totally lost.

38. ... ♘b6-c4

Black simply has too many pawns.

39. ♕b7-d5 ♗f5-d7

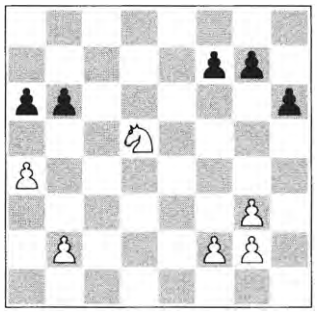
40. ♖e2-e7! ♗f8xe7

41. ♖e1xe7 ♗d7-e8

42. ♗f3-e4 ♔g8-f8

White resigned.

Structure 2.8



d4-d5 break to get a pawn symmetry with a dominant piece in the centre

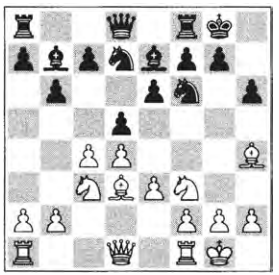
In isolated pawn-positions, it is a common strategy for the side playing with the isolani to carry through a pawn break (in this case d4-d5), and after exchanging a few pieces obtain a symmetric pawn structure with the better placed pieces in the centre, retaining some initiative. At first sight it often seems that after a few good moves this initiative will evaporate, full equality will be reached and the game will inevitably be drawn. Well, more often than not, for the defending side those 'few good equalizing moves' are nowhere to be found. Here are two instructive examples.

QO 7.10 (D58) **GAME 28**

Alexey Vyzhmanavin
Alexander Beliavsky
Novosibirsk 1995 (7)

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
5.	**♗c1-g5**	**h7-h6**
6.	**♗g5-h4**	**0-0**
7.	**e2-e3**	**b7-b6**
8.	**♗f1-d3**	**♗c8-b7**
9.	**0-0**	**♘b8-d7**

Now Vyzhmanavin plays his favourite variation against the Tartakower, which is still considered one of the main lines today.



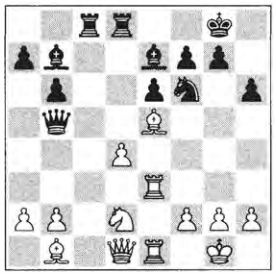
10. ♕d1-e2

White may also start with 10.♗g3 and after 10...c5 opt for 11.cxd5 (11.♕e2 would bring us back to the game, while after 11.♖c1 ♘e4 12.cxd5 exd5 13.dxc5 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 bxc5 a strategi-

cally different type of position is reached, where Black has the bishop pair and two parallel hanging pawns in the centre) and now:

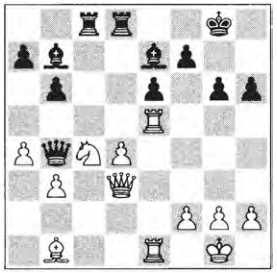
A) 11...♘xd5 12.♖c1 (a long time ago, in Wijk aan Zee 1995 against Paul van der Sterren, I seriously mixed up the variations and played 12.♕e2 here, only to discover that after 12...cxd4 13.exd4 ♘7f6 14.♖ac1 ♖c8 15.♘e5? (this 'active' move makes matters much worse) 15...♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♕d5! 17.♘f3 (sad necessity, as 17.f3?? loses to 17...♖xc3 18.♖xc3 ♕xd4+) 17...♘e4! 18.c4 ♘xg3 19.hxg3 ♕d6 I was left without a bishop pair and with a weak d-pawn to worry about – which I lost later on in the process – and had to fight for another five hours to escape with a draw) 12...cxd4 13.exd4 (White is better off not entering the isolated pawn position here and opt for the dynamic 13.♘xd5 ♗xd5 14.e4. The tactical tussle is, however, likely to result in an equal position after 14...♗b7 15.♗c7 ♕e8 16.♘xd4 ♖c8! 17.♗b5 a6 18.♗a4 b5 19.♘xb5 ♘c5 20.♘d6 ♕xa4 21.♖xc5 ♕xd1 22.♖xd1 ♗xe4 and a draw was soon agreed in Atalik-Beliavsky, Ulcinj 1997) 13...♖c8. This version of the isolated pawn-position is very comfortable for Black, since White is not able to develop the desired initiative in order to compensate for his pawn weakness.

The game Yermolinsky-Beliavsky, Groningen PCA 1993, excellently demonstrates the deficiencies of White's strategy: 14.♗b1 ♘7f6 15.♗e5 ♘xc3! 16.♖xc3 (or 16.bxc3 ♕d5 17.♕d3 ♕c4 18.♕c2 ♗e4 and again, White has no activity to compensate for his weak pawns) 16...♕d5 (16...♖xc3 17.bxc3 ♕d5 18.♕d3 ♖c8 was also good) 17.♖e3 (moving away the rook so he will only have to worry about one weak pawn – d4 – instead of two – c3 and d4) 17...♖fd8 18.♖fe1 ♕b5 19.♘d2



analysis diagram

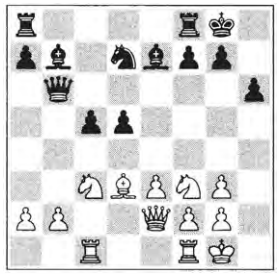
19...♘d7! 20.a4 ♕a5! (better than 20...♕b4? 21.♖b3 ♕xa4? 22.♗xg7! and White wins) 21.♘c4 (understanding that the strategic battle has been lost, Yermolinsky is desperately looking for tactics, trying to complicate matters) 21...♕b4 (21...♖xc4?? would be a beginner's blunder due to 22.♕d3) 22.♕d3 g6 23.b3 ♘xe5 24.♖xe5



analysis diagram

24...♗f6! 25.♖xe6 (White has already burned his bridges and this sacrifice is desperation caused by a strategic disaster) 25...♖xd4 and Black soon won;

B) Another reply is 11...exd5. After 12.♖c1 (12.♘e5 has also been played) 12...♘e4 13.dxc5 ♘xg3 14.hxg3 bxc5 15.♕e2, another position where Black has the bishop pair and parallel hanging pawns in the centre has been reached. A game Zhukova-Skripchenko, Krasnoturinsk 2003, showed how easily things can go wrong here. White scored a quick, instructive victory after 15...♕b6



analysis diagram

16.e4! d4 17.♘a4 ♕e6? 18.b4! cxb4 19.♖c7 ♗c8 20.e5! ♖b8 21.♗c4 ♕g4 22.e6.

10. ... c7-c5

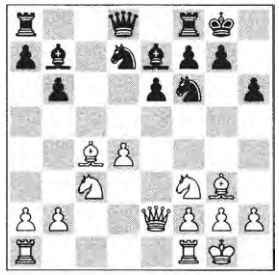
11. ♗h4-g3 c5xd4

Black decides to go for an isolated pawn-position. His other option was to keep the tension in the centre. Later on, he will likely play with two parallel hanging pawns in the centre himself, after 11...♘e4 12.cxd5 exd5 13.♖ad1 ♕c8, keeping the tension and planning – after ...♘df6 – to transfer the queen to e6, is a sound positional plan here and will – along with other possibilities for Black – be examined later in this book in Lautier-Short (Game 40), under the section 'two parallel hanging pawns in the centre'.

11...dxc4 12.♗xc4 a6 13.a4 cxd4 14.exd4 would transpose to the game.

12. e3xd4 d5xc4

13. ♗d3xc4



13. ... a7-a6

Alternatively, Black may start with 13...♗b4 in order to take on c3, creating a new potential pawn weakness in the white camp while keeping full control of the d5-square. This could well be the safest and best plan here, for instance:

A) The attempt to make use of the fact that the b5-square is not protected and to develop an immediate initiative with 14.♘b5 does not seem to bring White anything special: 14...♘e4 15.a3 ♘xg3 16.hxg3 ♗e7 17.♖fd1 ♘f6 with approximate equality in Ftacnik-Beliavsky, Vienna 1986;

B) 14.♖ac1 is answered by 14...♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♘e4 16.♗f4 ♖c8 17.♘d2 ♘df6. The black pawn is well placed on a7 and the position was about equal in Arencibia-Beliavsky, Elista Olympiad 1998.

It is indeed better for Black here not to include 13...a6 14.a4, since this inclusion often forces him to keep his rook on a8 to defend the a6 pawn.

13...♘h5 is another option, eliminating White's dark-squared bishop but allowing the d5 break: 14.d5 ♘xg3 15.hxg3 exd5 16.♘xd5! (the old school probably thought that White should eliminate Black's bishop pair, so in Gligoric-Petrosian, Zurich 1961,

White decided to exchange the light-squared bishops with 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♘xd5. However, without the active bishop on c4 White was not able to develop any meaningful initiative and Black was OK after 17...♖e8 18.♖fd1 ♗c5 19.♕c4 ♖c8) 16...♗d6 17.♖fd1 ♘f6 18.♘e3 with an initiative for White.

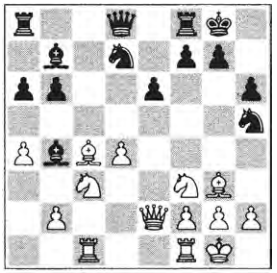
14. a2-a4 ♗e7-b4

Black may also decide to eliminate White's dark-squared bishop immediately with 14...♘h5. Just like in the game, that plan has the drawback that Black loses control of the d5-square, so it allows the typical break 15.d5, for example: 15...♘xg3 16.hxg3 exd5 17.♘xd5! (it is a good idea for White to keep the light-squared bishops on the board here, since it makes it easier for him to develop the initiative. White has only a small plus after 17.♗xd5 ♗xd5 18.♘xd5 – it should be noted that should Black choose for this plan, then he is better off to implement it with his pawn on a7, as in the game Gligoric-Petrosian) 17...♗d6 18.♖fd1.

Here it also appears rather difficult for Black to neutralize White's initiative. In the game Sasikiran-Barsov, Doha 2003, White followed a plan similar to Vyzhmanavin's, and was successful after 18...♘f6 19.♘e3! ♕e7 20.♘h4 ♖fd8 21.♘hf5 ♕f8 22.♘g4! (the white knights cause a lot of trouble for Black here) 22...♘e4 23.♖d4 ♖e8 24.♕d3 ♖ad8 25.♖d1 ♗c7 26.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 27.♕c4+ ♔g6 28.♕xc7.

15. ♖a1-c1 ♘f6-h5

Black follows a standard plan, which allows a standard reaction.



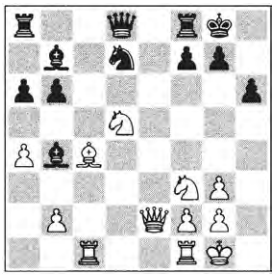
16. d4-d5! ♘h5xg3

17. h2xg3 e6xd5

17...♗xc3? is a typical blunder that loses to 18.dxe6 ♗b4 19.♖fd1 ♗c6 20.♘e5.

18. ♘c3xd5

As in several previously-mentioned examples, White believes that he has better chances for an initiative with the light-squared bishops on the board. Black would gradually equalize in the event of 18.♗xd5 ♕b8!.



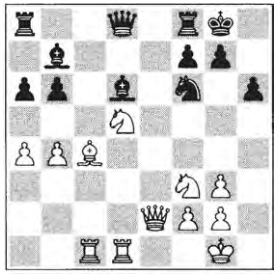
18. ... ♗b4-c5

A critical moment in the game. Black could have equalized with the dynamic 18...♖e8! 19.♕c2 b5! 20.axb5 axb5 21.♘xb4 bxc4 22.♕xc4 ♗xf3 23.gxf3 ♘e5 24.♕c3 ♖b8! 25.f4 ♖xb4! 26.♕xb4 (or 26.fxe5 ♕b8) 26...♘f3+ 27.♔g2 ♕d5 28.♔h3! ♕h5+ 29.♔g2 ♘h4+ 30.gxh4 ♕g4+ with a draw.

19. b2-b4 ♗c5-d6

Black has missed his opportunity to equalize. 19...♖e8? is no longer good due to 20.♕a2! ♗d6 21.♘c7! ♗xc7 22.♗xf7+ ♔h8 23.♗xe8, winning.

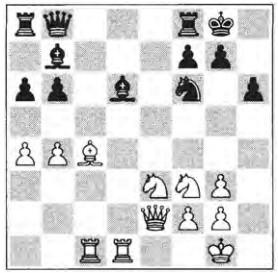
20. ♖f1-d1 ♘d7-f6



21. ♘d5-e3! ♕d8-e7

It may be surprising, but the white attack is extremely strong and Black's position can collapse at any moment.

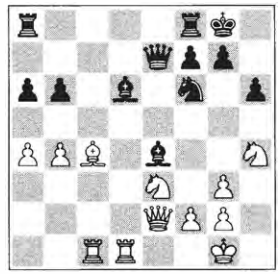
21...♕b8 does not help either. The following variation is a good illustration of White's attacking potential:



analysis diagram

22.♘f5! ♗xb4 23.♕b2 ♗xf3 (23...♗c5 loses to 24.♘xh6+ gxh6 25.♕xf6 ♕xg3 26.♖d7! ♗xf2+ 27.♔f1) 24.gxf3 ♗c5 25.♔g2 (White's pieces are coordinating perfectly and Black is helpless against the straightforward threat of 26.♘xh6+) 25...b5 (or 25...♘e8 26.♗d5! ♖a7? 27.♖xc5) 26.♗d5 bxa4 27.♘xh6+.

22. ♘f3-h4! ♗b7-e4



23. ♕e2-d2! ♗d6-c7

White conducts the attack beautifully, using the potential of his forces to the maximum. 23...♗xb4 was probably better than the text, but would not solve the problems either: 24.♘ef5! ♗xf5 (or 24...♕c5 25.♕f4) 25.♘xf5 ♕e5 (or 25...♕c5 26.♕f4) 26.♘xh6+ gxh6 27.♕xb4 and White has a large advantage.

24. ♘h4-f5 ♗e4xf5

Black decides to eliminate one of the white knights. On the other hand, the immediate 24...♕e5 would allow 25.f4 ♕e8 26.b5! (26.♕c3? would be a mistake, allowing Black counterplay with 26...b5!, opening the a7-g1 diagonal) 26...a5 (26...♖d8 loses to 27.♕c3 a5 28.♘xh6+) 27.♕c3 and White has a winning advantage.

25. ♘e3xf5 ♕e7-e5

26. ♗c4-d3!

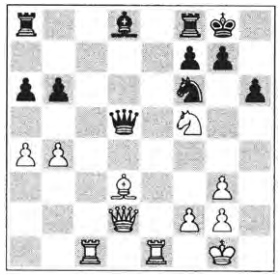
Due to his poor piece coordination, Black is not able to defend against White's threats. After missing his equalizing opportunity with 18...♖e8, he remains 'one tempo short' for the rest of the game. Note the attacking power and the great coordination of White's f5 knight and light-squared bishop.

26. ... ♗c7-d8

Other moves also lose, for example: 26...♘d5 27.f4 ♕e6 (27...♕f6 28.♗e4) 28.♕b2 or 26...♖fd8? 27.f4.

27. ♖d1-e1 ♕e5-d5

White mates in case of 27...♕b8 28.♘xh6+! gxh6 29.♕xh6 ♕d6 30.♗h7+ ♔h8 31.♗f5+ ♔g8 32.♖c4.



28. ♖c1-c4!

Total domination. Game over.

28. ... ♖f8-e8?

Black blunders in a hopeless position. However, other moves also lose, for example: 28...♕d7 29.♖d4 ♕xa4 30.♘xh6+! gxh6 31.♕xh6; or 28...♖a7 29.♖h4! h5 (otherwise 30.♘xh6+) 30.♖d4 ♕a8 31.♘xg7; or 28...♘e4 29.♕e2 ♘f6 30.♖d4 ♕b7 31.♕d2 and the next move is 32.♘xh6+.

29. ♖e1xe8+ ♘f6xe8

30. ♘f5-e7+! 1-0

Black loses his queen after 30...♗xe7 31.♗h7+.

QG 14.5 (D27) **GAME 29**

Ivan Sokolov

Predrag Nikolic

Elenite 1993 (4)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5

2. c2-c4 d5xc4

3. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6

4. ♗f1xc4 e7-e6

5. ♘g1-f3 c7-c5

6. 0-0 a7-a6

7. ♗c4-d3

One of the main moves here, the idea being that White is ready to answer 7...b5 with 8.a4.

7. ... ♘b8-c6

A) 7...cxd4 is a rather interesting idea that Predrag obviously had in mind, but he found it a bit risky, so he let his brother try it. Nebojsa Nikolic does not play chess at an international level anymore, but was a reasonable IM during his active years. 8.exd4 and now:

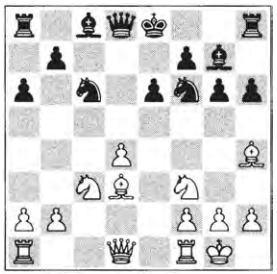
analysis diagram

8...g6!?. An original plan. Black puts his bishop on g7 and with his pawn already on g6, Black's kingside is considerably less vulnerable to attack. However, this plan takes time and allows White to execute the thematic d4-d5 thrust: 9.♘c3 ♗g7 10.♗g5 h6 and now:

A1) White can opt for 11.♗xf6, parting with his bishop pair, but winning some more time, for instance: 11...♗xf6 (in the case of 11...♕xf6 White is clearly better after the standard 12.d5! 0-0 13.♖e1 ♖d8 14.♖c1) 12.♖e1 (12.♕d2 ♗g7 13.d5 0-0 14.♗e4 would not be effective due to 14...f5! 15.♗c2 e5 16.♖fe1 ♘d7 and

with a bishop pair and his mobile pawns in the centre, Black more than compensates for the advanced white d-pawn; 17.d6 e4 18.♘d4 ♘e5 and Black is better) 12...0-0 13.♕d2 ♗g7 14.♖ad1 (with all his pieces well developed, White is ready for the d4-d5 thrust) 14...♕a5 (White is better in the case of 14...♘c6 15.♗e4 ♘e7 16.d5! exd5 17.♘xd5 ♗e6 18.♘f4 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2) 15.♗c4 ♘d7 16.d5! ♘b6 17.♗b3 exd5 (with all his pieces well developed and coordinated, tactics should work for White. For example: 17...♖d8? 18.♕f4! exd5 19.♘xd5! ♘xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xd5 21.♖e8+ ♔h7 (or 21...♗f8 22.♗xd5 ♕xd5 23.♕b4! ♕d1+ 24.♘e1, winning) 22.♕xf7 ♗e6 23.♖xe6, winning) 18.♘xd5 ♕xd2 19.♘e7+ ♔h7 20.♖xd2 ♗g4 21.♘e5! ♗xe5 22.♖xe5 and as usually happens after a well-executed d4-d5 break, the pawn structure is symmetrical but White's pieces are better placed, which gives him the upper hand.

A2) 11.♗h4 ♘c6



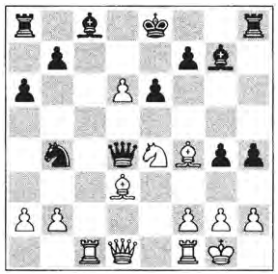
analysis diagram

White has a temporary lead in development and must use this window of opportunity to develop the initiative.

A21) 12.♖c1 ♘xd4! 13.♕a4+ ♘c6 14.♖fd1 ♕b6 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.♕f4 ♗g7 17.♘a4 ♕a5! 18.♖c5 ♕d8 19.♖xc6 bxc6 20.♗c2 ♕e7 21.♘b6 0-0 22.♘xa8 ♕b7 and in Petursson-N. Nikolic, Lugano 1989, the game was about even, since White does not have anything tangible in the ending arising after 23.♘c7 e5 24.♘xe5 ♕xc7 25.♘xg6 ♕xf4 26.♘xf4 ♗xb2;

A22) 12.♗e4 ♘e7 13.♕a4+ ♗d7 14.♕a3 g5! 15.♗g3 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 0-0 17.♗d6 ♖e8 18.♗e5 ♘f5 with an unclear game, Brenninkmeijer-N. Nikolic, Netherlands tt 1993;

A23) 12.d5! ♘e7 (taking the pawn does not help: 12...exd5 13.♖e1+ ♗e6 (after 13...♘e7 14.♕a4+ ♗d7 15.♕d4 g5 16.♘xd5! wins; or 13...♔f8 14.♕b3, with a clear advantage for White) 14.♗xg6 0-0 15.♗c2 and White is much better) 13.d6! ♘c6 14.♘e4 g5 15.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16.♗g3 and Black has terrible problems developing his pieces. One of the lines that illustrate the problems Black is facing is 16...g4 17.♘d2 h5 18.♘e4 ♕d4 19.♖c1 h4 20.♗f4 ♘b4



analysis diagram

21.♗e3!! ♕xd3 22.♕xg4 ♗xb2 23.♖fd1 and White wins: 23...♕b5 24.d7+ ♗xd7 25.♘d6+;

B) 7...♘bd7 is the other move often played here. Now, apart from the fre-

quently seen 'regular QGA plan' 8.♕e2 and 9.♖d1, White can also steer the game into Meran-type positions with 8.♖e1 b6 9.e4 cxd4 10.e5 ♘d5 11.♘xd4 ♘c5 12.♗f1 ♗b7 13.♘d2 ♗e7 14.♕g4 0-0 15.♘2f3 ♔h8, as in Kramnik-Kasparov, Linares 2003.

8. a2-a3

One of the standard moves here, 8.♘c3 being the other option.

8. ... c5xd4

Black decides to determine the situation in the centre, opting for the isolated pawn position. White would have a small advantage in the case of 8...♕c7 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.b4 ♗e7 11.♗b2.

9. e3xd4 ♗f8-e7
10. ♘b1-c3 0-0
11. ♗d3-c2

11. ... b7-b6

A cautious move that makes sure that the c5-square remains protected. During the game I considered 11...b5 to be more logical, trying to create counterplay on the queenside as quickly as possible. However, the weakness of the c5-square can play a role here, for instance: 12.♕d3 ♗b7 13.♗g5 (13.♖e1 g6 14.♗b3 ♖c8 15.♗h6 ♖e8 16.♗a2 b4 was about equal in Najdorf-Polugaevsky, Mar del Plata 1971) 13...g6 14.♖ad1 b4 15.♘a4 bxa3 16.bxa3 ♘a5 17.♘c5 ♗c6 18.♖fe1 and due to the well-placed knight on c5 White was better in Donner-Van Scheltinga, Wijk aan Zee 1969.

12. ♗c1-g5

12.♖e1 immediately would have given Black the chance to carry out a known rook manoeuvre: 12...♖a7!? 13.♕d3 ♖d7 14.♗e3 ♗b7 15.♖ad1 g6 as in Vaganian-Bronstein, Tbilisi 1973.

12. ... ♗c8-b7
13. ♕d1-d3 g7-g6
14. ♖a1-d1 ♖a8-c8
15. ♗c2-b3

The light-squared bishop has done its duty forcing a weakening of the black kingside, and now has to return to the a2-g8 diagonal.

15. ... b6-b5

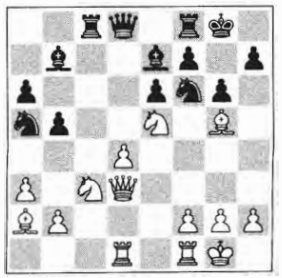
15...♘a5 16.♗a2 ♘d5?! would allow White to change the pawn structure from an isolated pawn-position to a favourable pawn symmetry in the centre with 17.♗xd5 exd5 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.♖fe1. As explained earlier in the book (see Sokolov-Cebalo, Game 24), due to Black's passive b7 bishop and White's control of the e5-square, which he can occupy with his knight or with a rook, White has a long-term advantage here.

16. ♗b3-a2 ♘c6-a5

Black wants to put his knight on c4 and shut off the white bishop. The other possibility was 16...b4, in which case, as previously seen in the comment related to 11...b5, White would be slightly better due to the weakness of the c5-square after 17.♘a4 bxa3 18.bxa3, with ♘c5 to follow.

17. ♘f3-e5

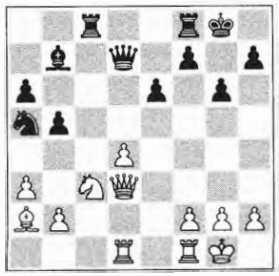
Naturally I decided to prevent Black from shutting in my bishop.



17. ... ♘f6-d7

17...♘d5 is the other logical move, which does not address the problem of the active white knight on e5, but rather secures the blockade on d5. After correct play by White this plan does not equalize either: 18.♗xe7! (at first sight, the 'active' 18.♗h6 looks good, but Black has a strong response in the instructive 18...♘xc3! (18...♖e8 plays into White's hands after 19.♕f3! f6 20.♕g4 ♗f8 21.♘xg6! ♗xh6 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5 23.♘e7+ ♔h8 24.♘cxd5 exd5 25.♘xc8 ♕xc8 26.♕h5 and White is better) 19.bxc3 ♖e8 20.♖fe1 ♗d5. We now have a thematic position where White has two weak pawns to worry about – a3 and c3 – and finds it difficult to create enough threats on the other side to keep Black busy) 18...♘xe7 (in the case of 18...♕xe7 White carries out the usual structural transformation from isolated pawn to symmetry in the centre, retaining the upper hand with 19.♗xd5 ♗xd5 20.♘xd5 exd5 21.♖fe1 and as seen before, White is better here) 19.♖fe1 ♘d5 20.♘e4.

18. ♗g5xe7 ♕d8xe7
19. ♘e5xd7 ♕e7xd7



20. d4-d5!

A number of pieces have been exchanged and White cannot realistically count on a kingside attack anymore, so the time has come for the thematic d4-d5 break, when a symmetrical pawn structure is reached in which White has a dominant piece in the centre – in this case, a knight – and Black, as is often seen in such positions, will find it difficult to neutralize the white initiative.

20. ... e6xd5

Ignoring the pawn and shutting in the white bishop with 20...♘c4 does not solve Black's problems, since White exerts further pressure: 21.♕h3! (21.♘e4? is not good because of the positional 21...f5!; but 21.♗xc4 ♖xc4 (or 21...bxc4 22.♕h3) 22.d6 ♕c6 23.♕g3 should also promise White some advantage) 21...f5 22.dxe6 ♕xe6 23.♖fe1 ♕f7 (or 23...♕f6 24.♖d7 ♖f7 25.♖xf7 ♕xf7 26.♕h4) 24.♕h4 ♖fe8 25.h3 and White retains an initiative.

21. ♗a2xd5!

An important move. It is much better for White to have a dominant knight on d5 than a bishop.

21. ... ♔g8-g7

21...♘c6? would only make matters worse for Black after 22.♘e4.

22. ♕d3-d4+ f7-f6
23. ♖f1-e1 ♗b7xd5

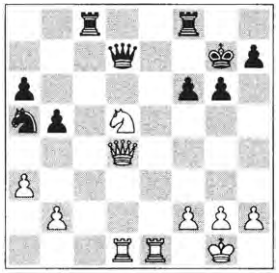
So far, Black has refrained from capturing the white bishop in order not to activate the white knight. Now the pressure on his position has increased and he finally decides to take the bishop. Other moves would not neutralize White's initiative either, for example:

A) 23...♘c4?? simply blunders a piece after 24.♗xc4 ♕xd4 25.♖xd4 bxc4 26.♖e7+ ♖f7 27.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 28.♖d7+;

B) 23...♖fd8? loses to 24.♘e4;

C) After the comparatively best 23...♖fe8 24.♘e4 ♕e7! (24...♗xd5? loses to 25.♘xf6 ♖xe1+ 26.♖xe1 ♘b3 27.♕e5! ♕e6 28.♘h5+ ♔h6 29.♕f4+ ♔xh5 30.♖xe6 ♗xe6 31.h3 with g2-g4 to follow) 25.♗xb7 ♘xb7 26.f3 ♖cd8 27.♕b6 White executes a plan similar to the game, attacking Black's weak queenside pawns, while at the same time maintaining the threats against the black king.

24. ♘c3xd5



24. ... ♘a5-c6

It is quite possible that Nikolic missed or underestimated my next move. However, the position is extremely difficult to defend. Perhaps Black's biggest problem is that he has no counterplay at all.

The most stubborn defence was 24...♖f7. Now, the attempt to use elementary book tactics with 25.♖e7? would be justified after 25...♕c6? 26.♘xf6! ♖xe7 (or 26...♕xf6 27.♖xf7+ ♔xf7 28.♕d7+, and White wins) 27.♘d5+ ♔f7 28.♘xe7 ♔xe7 29.♕g7+ ♔e6 30.♖e1+ ♔d5 31.♕e5+ ♔c4 32.♕c3+ ♔d5 33.♖e5+ ♔d6 34.♕d4+ ♔c7 35.♖e7+ ♔b8 36.♕a7 mate, but it would backfire after 25...♖xe7! 26.♕xf6+ ♔h6 27.♕h4+ ♔g7 28.♕f6+ ♔h6 and White has no more than a draw: 29.♕xe7 ♕xd5 30.♕e3+ ♕g5 31.♕h3+ ♕h5 32.♕e3+ ♕g5 (32...♔g7?? would be a road to disaster after 33.♖d7+) 33.♕h3+ with perpetual check.

But after White simply improves his position with 25.h3, it is difficult to defend against the multiple threats. For example, if Black tries to become active with 25...♖c2, then 26.♖e7! quickly decides.

25. ♕d4-b6!

With the double threat of 26.♘e7, or simply 26.♕xa6, picking up a pawn.

25. ... ♖c8-b8

Black indeed has to give a pawn, since 25...♕a7?? would lose the queen after 26.♖e7+, while in the case of 25...♖fe8, 26.♘e7! wins.

26. ♕b6xa6 ♕d7-b7

Even though White has a material advantage, Black has to exchange queens and enter an endgame, since otherwise he cannot parry the white threats.

27. ♕a6xb7+ ♖b8xb7

28. ♘d5-f4

White is a healthy pawn up and has retained the initiative, so the endgame should be won.

28. ... ♖f8-a8

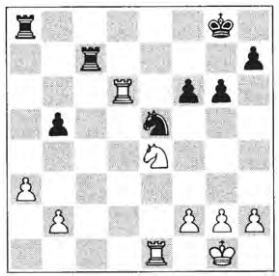
29. ♘f4-e6+ ♔g7-g8

29...♔f7? is a blunder that would lose an exchange after 30.♖d6!.

30. ♖d1-d6 ♘c6-e5

31. ♘e6-c5 ♖b7-c7

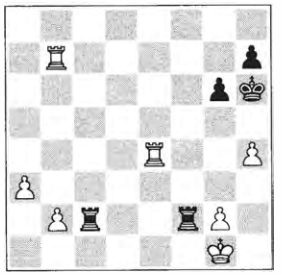
32. ♘c5-e4



32. ... ♘e5-c4

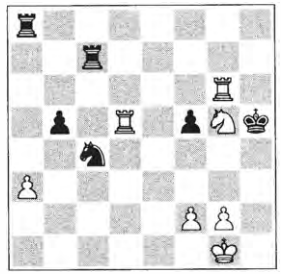
White's pieces are coordinating very well and apart from being a pawn up, there are also plenty of tactics in the position working in his favour.

Black is looking for an active defence, but the weakened position of his king does not allow him to create any serious counterplay. His problems can also be seen in the following variation: 32...f5 33.♖d5! ♘c4 (the attempt to bail out in the rook endgame would not work, for example: 33...fxe4 34.♖xe5 ♖c2 35.♖xb5 ♖d8 (or 35...♖f8 36.♖f1 ♖d8 37.b4 ♖dd2 38.♖e5) 36.h4! ♖dd2 37.♖xe4 ♖xf2 38.♖b8+! ♔g7 39.♖b7+ ♔h6



analysis diagram

40.g4! and the black king finds himself in a mating net) 34.♘f6+ ♔f7 35.♘xh7 ♘xb2 36.♘g5+ ♔f6 37.h4 ♘c4 38.♖e6+ ♔g7 39.h5! gxh5 (Black gets mated in the case of 39...♔h6 40.♖xg6+ ♔xh5



analysis diagram

41.♖f6! ♔xg5 42.♖dxf5+ ♔h4 43.♖g6 ♖h8 44.♔h2 and 45.g3 mate) 40.♖xf5 ♘xa3 41.♖ef6 with 42.♘e6 to follow. Again, with a limited number of pieces left, the white forces are coordinating extremely well, while the black king has no place to hide.

33. ♘e4xf6+ ♔g8-f7

Or 33...♔g7 34.♖de6.

34. ♖d6-e6 ♘c4xb2

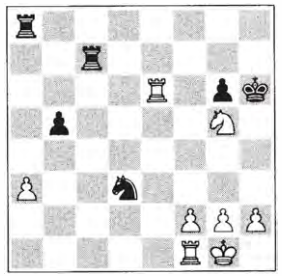
35. ♘f6xh7 ♘b2-d3

35...♖xa3? loses to 36.♘g5+ ♔g7 37.♖6e2.

36. ♘h7-g5+ ♔f7-g7

37. ♖e1-f1 ♔g7-h6

White remains two healthy pawns up after 37...♖xa3 38.♖b6 ♔h6 39.♖xb5.



38. ♖e6-e3! ♘d3-f4

Tactics continue to work for White: thus, 38...♖xa3 loses to 39.♘e6 with 40.♖h3 mate to follow.

39. h2-h4 ♖c7-a7
40. g2-g3 ♘f4-d5
41. ♖e3-d3 ♘d5-f6
42. ♖f1-b1 ♖a7xa3
43. ♖d3xa3 ♖a8xa3
44. ♖b1xb5

The smoke has cleared, and White is two pawns up in an easily won endgame.

44. ... ♖a3-a7
45. ♔g1-g2 ♔h6-g7
46. ♖b5-c5 1-0

Sacrificing an isolated pawn to gain the bishop pair and the initiative

The following example also falls under the concept of active piece play, though Kramnik sacrificed his isolated pawn in the process.

QG 11.14 (D27) **GAME 30**
Vladimir Kramnik
Robert Hübner
Dortmund 2000 (8)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5
2. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
3. c2-c4 d5xc4
4. e2-e3 e7-e6
5. ♗f1xc4 c7-c5
6. 0-0 a7-a6
7. ♗c4-b3

One of the main lines in the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

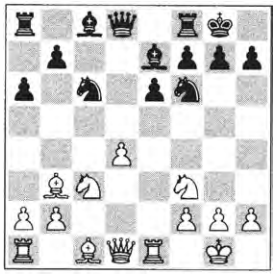
7. ... c5xd4

7...b5 or 7...♘c6 are the other main moves here.

8. e3xd4 ♘b8-c6
9. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
10. ♖f1-e1

10.♗g5 is the other rather logical move, examined further on in the notes to Kramnik-Anand, Game 34.

10. ... 0-0



11. h2-h4!?

Kramnik takes immediate action on the kingside and is ready to sacrifice a pawn in the process. There are many other logical possibilities here:

A) I played 11.♗g5 myself against Anand in Wijk aan Zee 1999. That game continued 11...b5 12.d5 (White gets rid of his weak pawn, hoping that after exchanges in the centre, due to his better developed pieces he will have the upper hand in the otherwise symmetrical position) 12...♘xd5 13.♗xd5 exd5 14.♕xd5 ♕xd5 15.♘xd5 ♗xg5 16.♘xg5 ♗b7 17.♘e4 (the position looks very drawish; however, due to his well-placed knights and Black's potentially weak queenside pawn, White has a very small edge) 17...♖fd8 18.♖ad1 ♘d4 (Black wants to exchange a few pieces in order to neutralize White's initiative) 19.♘b6 (much better was 19.♘c7! ♖ac8 (the tactic 19...♘e2+ does not help after 20.♔f1 ♖xd1 21.♖xd1 ♖c8 22.♘c5) 20.♘c5! (the tactical point behind 19.♘c7!) 20...h6 (20...♖xc7 21.♖xd4) 21.♘xb7 ♘e2+ 22.♔f1 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 ♖xc7 24.♔xe2 ♖xb7 25.♖d6 and due to his active rook White keeps an advantage in the endgame) 19...♖ab8 20.♘c5 ♗c6 21.♘bd7 ♗xd7 22.♖xd4 ♗e6 and the game was drawn;

B) 11.♗f4 (preparing the d4-d5 break) 11...♘a5 (11...b5 12.d5 is better for White) 12.♗c2 (the immediate 12.d5 does not bring anything special, since after 12...♘xb3 13.♕xb3 Black can sacrifice his queen with 13...♘xd5 (13...exd5 14.♖ad1 ♗e6 15.♕xb7 ♗d6 is also OK) 14.♖ad1 ♘xf4! 15.♖xd8 ♖xd8 16.♖d1 ♘d5! 17.♘xd5 exd5 18.h3 (or 18.♖xd5 ♗e6) 18...b5 with a dynamic balance) 12...b5 13.d5! (a thematic pawn sacrifice, very similar to Kramnik-Anand, Game 33, further on in the book) 13...exd5 14.♕d3 (White creates direct threats against the black king. Another option was to occupy the outpost d4 with the positional 14.♘d4, keeping the a5 knight out of play) 14...♘c6! 15.♗c7 ♕d7 (15...♕xc7?? would have been a horrible blunder due to 16.♘xd5) 16.♘e5 ♘xe5 17.♗xe5 g6 18.♗xf6 (White decides to take back the sacrificed pawn. The other option was to keep the tension with 18.♕d4 ♕d8 19.♗b3 ♗e6 20.♖ad1) 18...♗xf6 19.♘xd5 ♗g7. White could not capitalize on his dominant knight and a draw was soon agreed in Kasparov-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 1999;

11.a3 is another move here, which will be explored later in the book (see Kramnik-Anand, Game 33).

11. ... ♘c6-a5

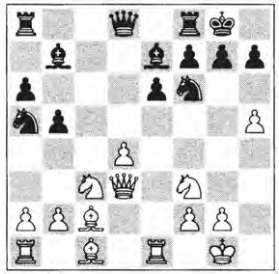
The white bishop has to be chased away from the a2-g8 diagonal. In case of the immediate 11...b5?! White gets a serious initiative after the thematic 12.d5! exd5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗xd5. Even though the pawn structure is symmetrical and it may seem that after a few moves Black will reach equality, White has a strong initiative. The following variation demonstrates his attacking potential:

analysis diagram

14...♗b7 15.♗g5! ♗xg5 16.♘xg5 h6 17.♘xf7! ♖xf7 18.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19.♕b3+ ♔f8 20.♖ad1. The white forces dominate the board and Black cannot defend against the numerous threats: 20...♕c7 (20...♕f6 loses to 21.♖d7 ♖b8 22.♖e6 ♕f5 23.♕e3! ♔g8 24.♕g3) 21.♕e6 ♖d8 22.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 23.♖e4 ♕b8 24.g3, winning.

12. ♗b3-c2 b7-b5
13. ♕d1-d3 ♗c8-b7
14. h4-h5!?

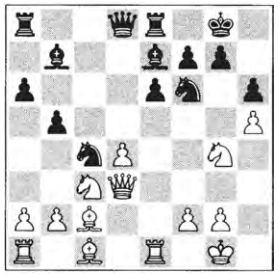
An interesting idea involving a pawn sacrifice. The standard 14.♗g5 g6 15.♘e5 does not bring anything after 15...♘c6 or 15...♖c8.



14. ... ♗b7xf3!

Black correctly decides to take the pawn. Other moves would allow an unpleasant attack. In the event of 14...♘c4 15.h6, Black has to choose between a damaged kingside pawn structure or a white pawn (after 15...g6) remaining on h6, making different kinds of tactics possible.

Should Black decide to stop the further advance of the white h-pawn with 14...h6, this has some new drawbacks after 15.♘e5! (entertaining, but insufficient for an advantage is 15.♗xh6!? ♗xf3! (not 15...gxh6? 16.♖xe6 ♖e8 17.♘e5! with 18.♖xf6 and 19.♕h7+ to follow) 16.♗g5 ♗xh5 17.♗xf6 ♗g6 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.♕e2 ♗xc2 20.♕xc2 as in Stocek-Jirovsky, Karlovy Vary ch-CZE 2004) 15...♘c4 16.♘g4 ♖e8 (only move)



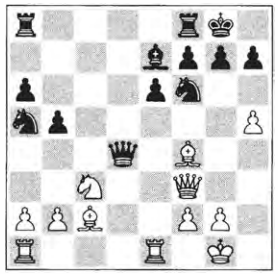
analysis diagram

17.♖xe6! (a typical tactical motif here) 17...fxe6 (should Black decide not to accept the sacrifice, then White is clearly better after 17...♔f8 18.♘xf6 ♗xf6 19.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 20.♗f4 ♕e6 21.d5) 18.♗xh6! with a crushing attack.

15. ♕d3xf3 ♕d8xd4

16. ♗c1-f4

For the sacrificed pawn White has gained the bishop pair, some attacking possibilities on the kingside and a few tempi related to the exposed black queen.



Most probably, objectively speaking White just has compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more. In a practical game, however, such intuitive sacrifices often bring success and Hübner soon loses his way.

16. ... b5-b4?

Most likely it was better for Black to stop the advance of the white h-pawn and eliminate some tactics with 16...h6!. Also (very important!), the pawn on h5 would now be a new weakness and something for White to worry about. It is not easy for White to prove adequate compensation here and this may be the reason why Kramnik never repeated this pawn sacrifice.

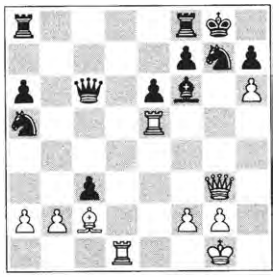
For instance: 17.♖ad1 ♕c5 18.♕g3 ♘xh5 19.♕d3 ♘f6! (19...♕f5 20.♕xf5 exf5 21.♘d5 ♘xf4 22.♘xe7+ ♔h7 23.g3 ♘h5 24.♗xf5+ g6 25.♗e4 ♖ad8 26.♘d5 ♔g7 27.♘c7 ♘f6 with equality, was played in Bareev-Rublevsky, Montecatini Terme 2000) 20.♘e4 ♕f5! repels White's threats, leaving Black with a material advantage.

17. ♖a1-d1! ♕d4-c4

White has grabbed the initiative. Other queen retreats do not solve Black's problems either, for example: 17...♕c5 18.♖e5 and now:

A) In Yermolinsky-Kaidanov, Seattle ch-USA 2000, White beautifully demonstrated his attacking potential after 18...♕b6 19.♕g3! bxc3 20.♗h6 g6 (White is better after 20...♘e8 21.♗xg7! ♘xg7 22.h6 ♗f6 23.hxg7 ♗xe5 24.gxf8♕+ ♔xf8 25.♕xe5) 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.♗xg6 ♔h8 23.♗xh7! ♖f7 24.♗g6 ♖g8 25.♗e3! c2 26.♖c1 ♕xb2 and now White missed the opportunity to finish the game in style with 27.♕h2+! ♖h7 28.♗xh7 ♘xh7 (28...♘g4 loses to 29.♕h3 ♘xe5 30.♗g6+ with mate in a few moves) 29.♖h5 ♖g7 30.♖xc2! (30.♖xa5 also wins), but the text is more brutal, since White mates after 30...♕xc2 31.♕b8+ ♖g8 32.♗d4+ ♗f6 33.♗xf6+;

B) 18...♕c6 19.♕g3! (this thematic attacking idea works here as well) 19...bxc3 20.♗h6 ♘e8 21.♗xg7 ♘xg7 22.h6 ♗f6.



analysis diagram

And here White concludes the attack with 23.♖h5!! (not 23.♖g5? ♖fd8! 24.♖xg7+ ♔f8) 23...♖fd8 24.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25.hxg7 ♗xg7 26.♖xh7 ♖d1+ 27.♔h2.

18. ♗c2-d3 ♕c4-c6

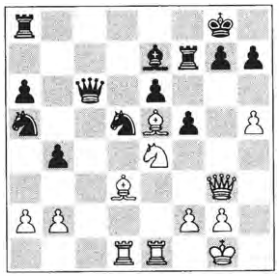
19. ♘c3-e4 ♘f6-d5

20. ♗f4-e5 f7-f5

After just a few moves, the black king finds himself under a terrible attack with very few defenders around.

20...f6 21.♗d4 does not help either.

21. ♕f3-g3 ♖f8-f7



22. ♘e4-d2!

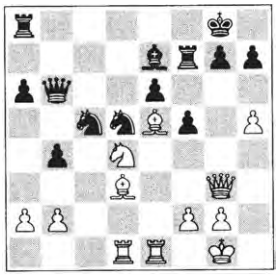
The knight travels to d4.

22. ... ♘a5-b7

23. ♘d2-f3 ♘b7-c5

24. ♘f3-d4 ♕c6-b6

The position is ripe for a tactical solution.



25. ♘d4xf5! e6xf5

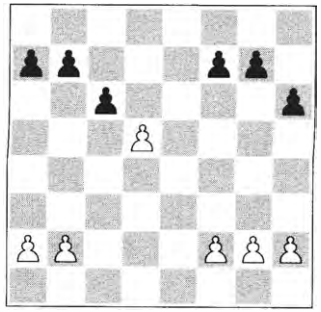
Black could have opted for a hopeless endgame with 25...♘xd3 26.♘h6+ ♔f8 27.♘xf7 ♕xf2+ 28.♕xf2 ♘xf2 29.♔xf2 ♔xf7.

26. ♗d3-c4 ♘d5-f6

27. ♗e5-c7! 1-0

A nice final touch. The attack executed by Kramnik is instructive and rather thematic for these positions.

Structure 2.9



Sacrificing an isolated pawn by means of the thematic d4-d5 break

One of the important strategic plans for the side playing with an isolated pawn is to temporarily sacrifice it (mostly by pushing d4-d5, or d5-d4 for Black) and obtain excellent piece play in return. If this strategy is executed well, then the initiative developed is worth much more than the small material investment. The breaking sacrifice of the isolated pawn is one of the very important typical motifs in this type of position. In the next couple of games I will try to give a number of instructive examples.

In the next Kasparov game, White always had the possibility to quickly regain his pawn with the better game, so even though it never amounted to a real sacrifice, the way Kasparov kept his initiative leaving his pawn hanging on d5 for a very long time and never allowing Timman to take it in a convenient way, was true 'power play'. Later we will also delve into some examples of the 'true' pawn sacrifice.

RG 6.5 (C42) **GAME 31**
Garry Kasparov
Jan Timman
Amsterdam 1994 (5)

1.	**e2-e4**	**e7-e5**
2.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘g8-f6**
3.	**♘f3xe5**	**d7-d6**
4.	**♘e5-f3**	**♘f6xe4**
5.	**d2-d4**	**d6-d5**
6.	**♗f1-d3**	**♘b8-c6**
7.	**0-0**	**♗f8-e7**
8.	**♖f1-e1**	

The other main line is 8.c4 ♘b4, while 8.♘c3 is a recent attempt by the Topalov/Cheparinov team.

8.	**...**	**♗c8-g4**
9.	**c2-c4**	**♘e4-f6**

More or less forced, since the position of this knight was undermined with 9.c4.

10. ♘b1-c3

Releasing the pressure in the centre with 10.cxd5 did not promise White an opening advantage after 10...♗xf3 (or 10...♘xd5) 11.♕xf3 ♕xd5.

10. ... d5xc4

Black releases the pressure in the centre, immediately entering an isolated pawn-position. This plan has the drawback – which is excellently exploited by Kasparov – that the usual blockade on d5 is not maintained, which means that White has tactical possibilities related to the d4-d5 push. After this game, 10...dxc4 has hardly been played anymore.

I myself have had experience with 10...0-0. Black enters a similar isolated pawn-position, with the difference that the blockade on the d5-square is maintained for quite some time, so that White cannot develop his initiative so easily.

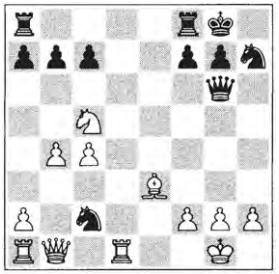
The game Shirov-Sokolov, Las Vegas 1999, continued 11.cxd5 ♘xd5 12.h3 ♗e6 13.a3 ♗f6 14.♘e4

analysis diagram

14...♗f5! 15.♕b3 ♘b6 16.d5 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 ♘e7 (the knight is heading for d6, where a perfect blockade would be achieved) 18.♗e3 ♘ec8 19.♖ac1 ♘d6 20.♗b1 ♕d7 with a more or less equal game.

Black can also decide to accept White's temporary pawn sacrifice with 10...♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘xd4 and after 12.♕d1 ♘e6!, White found it difficult to prove anything tangible in a dynamic position, which was played at top level in Morozevich-Gelfand, Mexico Wch 2007. That game continued: 13.♗f5 (13.cxd5 ♘xd5 14.♗b5+ c6 15.♘xd5 cxb5 16.♕b3 0-0 17.♘xe7+ (17.♗f4 was an interesting try by Naiditsch against Kramnik in Dortmund 2008) 17...♕xe7 18.♕xb5 a6 led to an equal game in Kasparov-Karpov, 15th World Championship match game, Moscow 1985) 13...d4!? (an ambitious attempt by Gelfand to keep dynamic play. White had not managed to prove an advantage with the previously played 13...dxc4 14.♕a4+ c6 15.♗xe6 fxe6 16.♕xc4 0-0 17.♕xe6+ ♖f7 18.♗e3 ♕d6 and a draw was soon agreed in Anand-Kramnik, Mainz 2001) 14.♘e2 d3! 15.♘f4 ♘d4 16.♗xd3 0-0 17.♗e3 ♗c5!? (a responsible move, relying on tactical resources. White would have a risk-free advantage in the case of 17...c5 18.♗xd4 cxd4 19.♕f3) 18.♕b1 (18.b4? is a blunder due to 18...♗xb4 19.♗xd4? ♗xe1) 18...♕d6! 19.♖d1 ♕e5! (tactical defence continues) 20.♗xh7+ (20.b4? would be wrong due to 20...♘f3+! 21.gxf3 ♗xe3) 20...♘xh7 21.♘d3 ♕f5 (Black could have forced a draw with 21...♘e2+ 22.♔h1 (22.♔f1?! would be asking for trouble after 22...♕xh2 23.♘xc5 ♘f4) 22...♘g3+! 23.♔g1 (23.hxg3? is a mistake due to the sim-

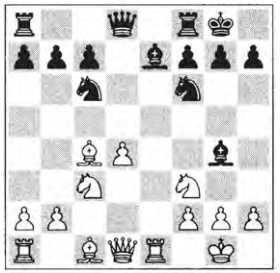
ple 23...♕h5+ 24.♔g1 ♗xe3, and White is left with a wrecked pawn structure) 23...♘e2+ with perpetual check) 22.♘xc5 ♘c2 23.b4 and now Black made a tactical oversight with 23...♕g6? (correct was 23...♖fe8)



analysis diagram

... which White could have exploited with 24.♘e6! fxe6 25.♖d2 and White takes the knight on c2, remaining a sound pawn up.

11. ♗d3xc4 0-0



12. d4-d5!

There is no doubt that Kasparov had made a thorough analysis of this 12th move. In his 1984 match against Karpov he had continued with 12.♗e3, which led to an equal game after the correct 12...♗xf3! 13.♕xf3 ♘xd4 14.♗xd4 ♕xd4 15.♖xe7 ♕xc4 16.♕xb7 c6 17.♕b3 ♕xb3 18.axb3 ♖ab8 19.♖a3 ♖fe8 20.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 and a draw was agreed.

12. ... ♘c6-a5!?

The most testing reply. White would have a solid, risk-free advantage in case of 12...♘b8 13.h3 ♗h5 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♗f4, or 12...♘b4 13.a3 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 ♘a6 15.♗f4 ♗d6 16.♗g3.

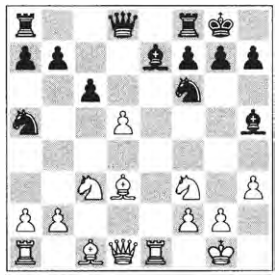
13. ♗c4-d3 c7-c6

14. h2-h3!

White has to act energetically to seize the initiative here. Black has comfortable equality in the event of 14.dxc6 ♘xc6.

14. ... ♗g4-h5

If Black decides to take the d5 pawn with 14...♗xf3? 15.♕xf3 cxd5 (capturing the pawn with the knight does not make things better: 15...♘xd5? 16.♘xd5 cxd5□ 17.♖e5! ♘c6 (17...d4? would lose a piece after 18.♖d5! ♕b6 (or 18...♕c7 19.♗f4) 19.♕e4) 18.♖xd5 and White has a huge advantage), White gets the pawn back, while keeping the initiative, after 16.♗g5 ♘c6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘xd5, as seen in the game Gutman-Hergott, Graz 1987.



15. ♖e1-e5!

The key move, probably prepared by Kasparov in his 'home kitchen'. White continues his attack in a very ingenious

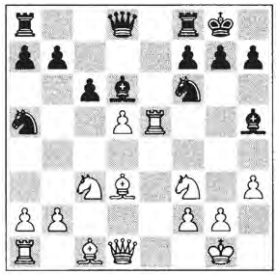
way, combining threats along the fifth rank with those against the black king.

15. ... ♗h5-g6

Facing a difficult position over the board, Timman chooses the most natural reply. The other moves would likely have run into Kasparov's home preparation and they do not solve the problems, for instance:

A) 15...cxd5 16.♘xd5! ♗xf3 17.♕xf3 ♘c6 18.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 19.♗g5 with a massive advantage.

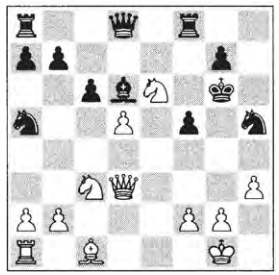
B) Arguably the 'most principled' reply, 15...♗d6, allows a strong attack:



analysis diagram

16.♖xh5! ♘xh5

B1) Now the thematic 17.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 18.♘g5+ does not seem to work after 18...♔g6 19.♕d3+ f5 20.♘e6.

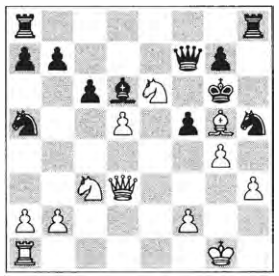


analysis diagram

B11) White wins in the case of 20...♕b8 21.g4! ♘f4 22.♗xf4 ♗xf4 23.♘xf8+ ♕xf8 24.b4! – in many lines the bad position of the black knight stranded on a5 is a key element;

B12) 20...♖e8 21.g4;

B13) In the case of 20...♕f6, White executes a nice mating attack with 21.g4! ♖h8 22.♗g5 ♕f7



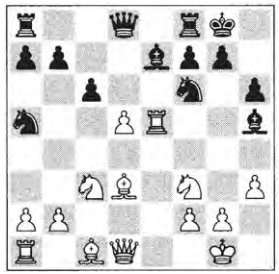
analysis diagram

23.♘e4!! ♗c7 24.♘f6!;

B14) 20...♕d7!! (the only move, but sufficient) 21.g4 ♘f6 22.♕xf5+ ♔f7 23.g5 cxd5 and Black wins.

B2) 17.♗g5! ♘f6 (17...f6 18.♗d2 with 19.♘d4 to follow, and Black is left with two horribly stranded knights on a5 and h5) 18.♘e4 cxd5 (18...♗e7? loses a piece after 19.d6) 19.♘xf6+ gxf6 20.♗h6 ♘c6 21.♕a4 and White will get his material back, while keeping the attack.

C) 15...h6 loses material:



analysis diagram

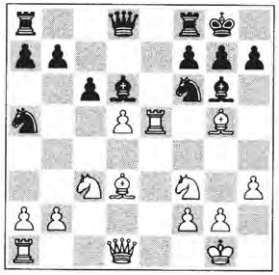
16.g4! ♗g6 17.♗xg6 fxg6 18.d6 ♗xd6 19.♖xa5 ♕xa5 20.♕xd6.

16. ♗c1-g5

Kasparov judges that his initiative is already worth more than just a clear material advantage, which could have been easily achieved with 16.♗xg6 hxg6 17.d6 ♗xd6 18.♖xa5 ♕xa5 19.♕xd6.

16. ... ♗e7-d6!

The only move. White wins in the event of 16...cxd5? 17.♗xg6 hxg6 18.♘xd5 ♗d6 19.♘xf6+ gxf6 20.♖d5, or 16...♘xd5? 17.♗xe7 ♘xe7 18.♗xg6 ♘xg6 19.♕xd8 ♖axd8 20.♖xa5.



17. ♖e5-e2

White also had a rather promising possibility – which to me looks even better than the text – in 17.♗xg6! hxg6 (17...♗xe5 loses to 18.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 19.♘xe5) 18.♖e4! and again the horrible position of the stranded knight on a5 makes life extremely difficult for Black.

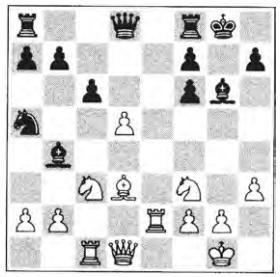
17. ... ♗d6-b4

18. ♗g5xf6! g7xf6

The other option was to suffer in the ending after 18...♕xf6 19.♗xg6 ♕xg6 (19...hxg6? is bad due to 20.♘e4 ♕d8 21.d6!) 20.♘e5! (Black has a reasonable chance to stay alive in the case of 20.♕d4 c5 21.♕f4 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♕d3 or 20.♕a4 ♗xc3 21.bxc3 b6) 20...♕d6 (20...♕f5 21.♕a4 ♗xc3 22.bxc3 b6 23.dxc6±) 21.dxc6± ♕xd1+ 22.♖xd1 ♘xc6 23.♘xc6 bxc6.

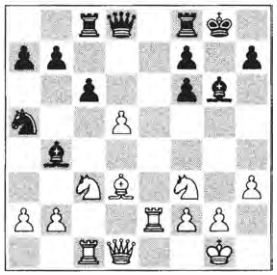
19. ♖a1-c1!

White brings his last piece into play, underlining, in many lines, the bad position of Black's a5 knight.



19. ... ♖a8-c8

This allows White to further activate his pieces and underlines the bad position of Black's knight on a5. However, other moves would not have solved the problems either, for example: 19...♗xc3 20.♖xc3 cxd5 (in the case of 20...♕xd5? Black would lose his a5 knight after 21.♖d2 ♕e6 22.b4 ♗xd3 23.♖dxd3 ♘c4 24.♘d4 ♕d5 25.♘b3 ♕b5 26.♕g4+) 21.♗xg6 hxg6 22.♘h4! (the key move, exerting more pressure. 22.♖d3 ♘c6 23.♖xd5 ♕b6 would likely result in a draw) 22...♖e8 (if 22...♖c8?, Black ends up simply a pawn down after 23.♖xc8 ♕xc8 24.♘xg6 fxg6 25.♕xd5+, while trying to keep the material would give White a devastating attack after 22...d4 23.♖g3 ♕d5 24.♕d3 ♕h5 25.♖e4 ♖fe8 26.♖eg4) 23.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 24.♘xg6 fxg6 25.♕xd5+ ♔h8 26.♕xa5 ♕e1+ 27.♔h2 ♕xf2 28.♕b4 and Black would have to defend a difficult position.



20. ♘c3-e4!

Due to the terrible position of the black knight on a5 and the clumsily placed black pieces in general, White has plenty of tactics working in his favour.

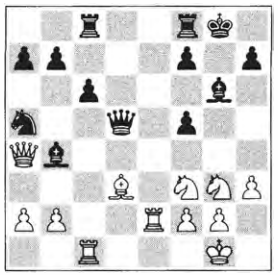
20. ... f6-f5

20...cxd5? loses to 21.♖xc8 ♕xc8 22.♘xf6+ ♔h8 23.♗xg6 fxg6 24.♘xd5 ♗d6 25.♕d4+.

21. ♘e4-g3 ♕d8xd5

22. a2-a3

Kasparov's move underlines once more the clumsy positions of the ♗b4 and the ♘a5. The attempt to go for an immediate win with 22.♕a4!? would not work so well:



analysis diagram

A) 22...♕xd3 23.♕xb4 ♕b5 (or 23...b6 24.h4 h5 25.♕f4) 24.♕f4 and while Black's knight is stranded on a5, White develops a deadly attack on the other side of the board;

B) Black would simply lose a piece in the event of 22...♗d6? 23.♖d2 ♗xg3 24.fxg3 ♖cd8 (or 24...b6 25.b4 ♘b7 26.♗a6) 25.♗f1 ♕e4 26.♕xa5 ♕e3+ 27.♔h2;

C) 22...c5! (the only move) 23.♖d1 (White gets a better ending, but not more, in case of 23.♗b5 a6 24.♗d7 ♖cd8 (not 24...b5? 25.♕d1 ♕xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♖cd8 27.a3 and White is a piece up) 25.♖d1 ♕c4 26.♘e5 b5! 27.♘xc4 bxa4) 23...♖cd8 24.a3 b5! 25.♕xb5 ♕b3 26.♗c2 ♖xd1+ 27.♔h2 ♕xb2 28.♗xd1 ♕xa3 29.♗c2 and even though White has good compensation due to the misplaced black pieces on the queenside, matters are still far from clear.

22. ... ♗b4-d6

23. ♘g3xf5!

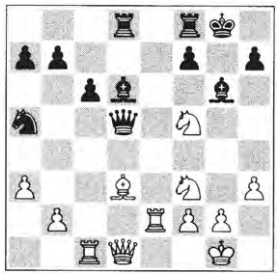
Simple and strong. Far less convincing is 23.b4 ♗xg3! (clearing the path for the queen retreat is the only defence. The immediate 23...♘b3? loses to 24.♗c4 ♘xc1 25.♕xc1! ♗xg3 26.♗xd5 cxd5 27.♕h6 ♗d6 28.h4) 24.fxg3 ♘b3 25.♖e5 (25.♗c4 now leads to an unclear position after 25...♘xc1 26.♗xd5 ♘xe2+ 27.♕xe2 cxd5) 25...♘xc1 26.♖xd5 cxd5 27.♗f1 ♖fd8 with a sharp game ahead.

23. ... ♖c8-d8?

This final blunder makes things relatively easy for White.

A) Under the circumstances it was probably best to defend a difficult ending which could have been reached after 23...♗xf5! 24.♗xf5 ♕xd1+ (not 24...♕xf5? 25.♕xd6 and due to the combination of the misplaced a5 knight and the weak king's position, this is completely hopeless for Black) 25.♖xd1 ♖cd8 26.♖d4;

B) The 'active' 23...♘b3? allows the game motifs, losing after 24.♖e5! ♗xe5 25.♘e7+ ♔g7 26.♘xd5 ♘xc1 27.♗xg6 cxd5 28.♗f5 ♘a2 (28...♘b3 loses to 29.♗c2) 29.♗xc8 ♖xc8 30.♕d2 ♖c1+ 31.♘e1.



24. ♖e2-e5! ♗d6xe5

Other moves lose even more quickly: 24...♕b3 25.♖xa5 ♕xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♗c7 27.♘e7+ ♔g7 28.♘xg6, or 24...♕xd3 25.♕xd3 ♗xe5 26.♕c2.

25. ♘f5-e7+ ♔g8-g7

26. ♘e7xd5 ♗e5xb2

Black is once more reminded of his misplaced knight on a5 in the event of 26...♖xd5 27.♘xe5 ♖xe5 28.♗xg6 hxg6 29.b4.

27. ♘d5-f4

The text is definitely sufficient, but probably even more convincing was 27.♕e2! ♗xc1 28.♕e5+ f6 (Black is mated in the case of 28...♔h6 29.♘f6 ♗xd3 30.♘g4+ ♔g6 31.♘h4 mate) 29.♕e7+ ♔h6 30.♗xg6 hxg6 31.♘xf6.

27. ... ♗g6xd3

Black gets mated after 27...♗xc1 28.♕xc1 ♗xd3 29.♘h5+ ♔h8 30.♕h6.

28. ♘f4xd3 ♗b2xc1

28...♖xd3 loses to 29.♕xd3 ♗xc1 30.♕c3+.

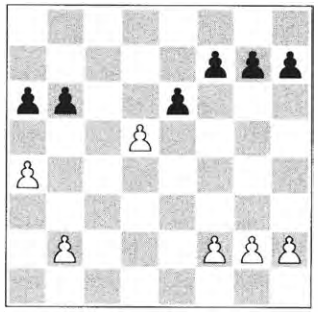
29. ♕d1xc1 ♖d8xd3

30. ♕c1-g5+

Black resigned.

He loses his a5 knight and remains under attack.

Structure 2.10



As Kramnik-Illescas Cordoba (Game 21), next is another game with the Tarrasch Variation that excellently illustrates some strategic issues around the isolated pawn.

QG 13.15 (D27) **GAME 32**

Tigran V Petrosian
Boris Spassky
Moscow Alekhine-mem 1971 (6)

1.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d5**
2.	**c2-c4**	**d5xc4**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘g8-f6**
4.	**e2-e3**	**e7-e6**
5.	**♗f1xc4**	**c7-c5**
6.	**0-0**	**a7-a6**
7.	**a2-a4**	

For many years this was considered the main line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

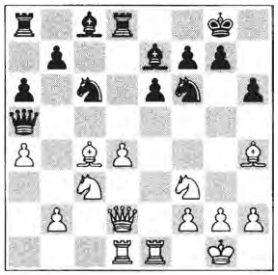
7. ... ♘b8-c6

In the isolated pawn-position that is about to arise, Black usually prefers White to have his f1 rook developed to d1 rather than to e1. Apart from the text, Black sometimes also takes on d4 immediately, which indeed leads to the position where the white f1 rook will be developed to e1.

In this line I can show a few examples of my own:

7...cxd4 8.exd4 ♘c6 9.♘c3 ♗e7 10.♖e1 0-0 11.♗g5 (a few years later, in the KO World Championship in Tripoli against Simutowe, I tried 11.♗f4 and obtained a small advantage after 11...♘d5 12.♗g3 ♘cb4 13.♘e5 b6 14.♘xd5 exd5 (a typical transformation, often seen in this book, has taken place: from an isolated pawn-position into a symmetrical structure in the centre where White has the upper hand) 15.♗b3 ♗f5 16.♕f3 ♗e6 17.♖ac1 ♖c8 18.♖c3!) 11...h6 12.♗h4 ♕b6 13.♕d2 ♖d8 14.♖ad1 ♕a5.

With all White's pieces well developed, the time is ripe for the thematic breakthrough:



analysis diagram

15.d5!.

A) Not surprisingly, the tactics work for White in the case of 15...♘xd5 16.♘xd5 ♗xh4 17.♕xa5 ♘xa5 18.♘b6! ♘xc4 19.♘xa8 ♘xb2 20.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 21.♖c1! ♗d7 22.♘e5 ♗c6 23.♘xc6 bxc6 24.♖xc6, winning;

B) Or 15...exd5 16.♘xd5 ♖xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗b4 18.♕d3 ♗xe1 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♕g6+ and Black gets mated;

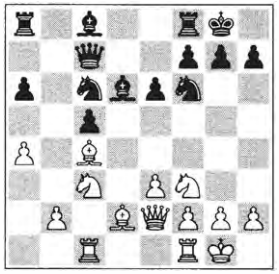
C) 15...♕c5 16.♕e2 exd5 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♖xd5! (better than 18.♘xd5 ♗f5 19.♘xf6+ gxf6 20.♖c1 ♕a5 with only a small advantage for White) 18...♕f8 19.♖xd8 ♗xd8 20.♕e8 g5! (only move) 21.♗xf7+ and White was clearly better in Sokolov-Anand, Prague (Eurotel) 2002.

8. ♕d1-e2 c5xd4

Black may also decide to keep the pawn structure in the centre intact and continue to develop his pieces with 8...♕c7, which is the other main line here. I have played several games in this line. One of them, against Rublevsky, Poikovsky 2002, continued 9.♘c3 ♗d6 10.♗d2 0-0.

A) 11.♖ac1 b6 and now:

A1) In the case of 12.dxc5 Black is well-advised not to be afraid of a potential pawn weakness and take 12...bxc5!.



analysis diagram

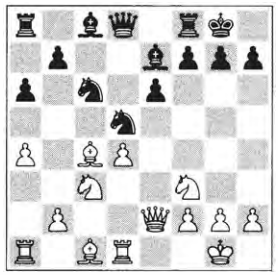
His well-placed pieces and good control of the central squares offer ample compensation for the visually damaged pawn structure on the queenside. Objectively, the position is approximately equal, for example: 13.h3 ♗b7 14.♖fd1 ♖fd8 15.♗e1 h6 16.♗d3 ♘e5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.f3 ♘d5 with even chances, Sokolov-Shirov, Sarajevo 2002;

A2) 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.♘e4 (this exchange is a typical plan here. After the swapping of knights, the white bishop will be well placed on e4, while the other bishop could be developed to c3) 13...♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♕e7 15.♖fd1 ♖ac8 16.dxc5 (otherwise Black takes ...cxd4) 16...♗xc5 (taking with the pawn – 16...bxc5? – is not a very good advice here, since White is better after 17.♗c3. In comparison with my game against Shirov, White is the one controlling the central squares here, while the potential problems related to Black's damaged pawn structure remain) 17.h3 (in the absence of direct play, this useful move is normally a good idea) 17...♖fd8 18.♗c3 h6 19.♘d2 ♘b4 (White's well-placed bishop on e4 has to be exchanged) 20.♗xb7 ♕xb7 21.♕g4 (forcing a weakness) 21...f5 22.♕c4 ♘d5 23.♕b3 b5 24.♘f3 and due to the weakness of Black's e6 pawn I had a small advantage.

B) The other strategic option is the immediate push 11.d5!? exd5 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.♗xd5 ♖d8 (it is important for Black not to allow White to capitalize on his well-placed bishop) 14.h3 (White has to spend time on this move, since the immediate 14.e4? is wrong due to 14...♗g4) 14...♗h2+ 15.♘xh2 ♖xd5 16.♗c3 ♗e6 17.♘f3 ♖ad8 18.a5 and due to his better pawn structure (Black's 3 vs 2 pawn majority is fixed, whereas White's 4 vs 3 pawn majority is mobile) White had slight pressure in Kramnik-Anand, Monaco rapid 1999.

9. ♖f1-d1 ♗f8-e7
10. e3xd4 0-0
11. ♘b1-c3 ♘f6-d5

This is one of the main positions of the Queen's Gambit Accepted with 7.a4. Compared to the many other regular isolated pawn-positions, White has a pawn on a4 here (in most other cases this pawn is on a3), which has its pros and cons. With the pawn on a4, the white bishop on c4 is rather stable and it will also take Black more time to put his c8 bishop on the a8-h1 diagonal, since ...b7-b5 is never possible. On the other hand, now the b4-square is, and will remain, chronically weak and is a nice place for a black knight.



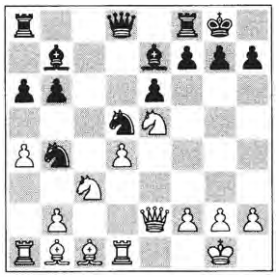
12. ♕e2-e4

The main move here.

A) White can also decide to first develop his c1 bishop with 12.♗d2, which is perhaps a little tame. Black gets an equal game after 12...♗f6 13.♕e4 ♘cb4 14.h4 ♗d7! (a correct decision; Black is just in time to create adequate counterplay) 15.♗g5 (it is rather obvious that Black would have at least enough compensation for the pawn in the case of 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♘xd5 ♘xd5 17.♕xd5 ♗c6) 15...♗c6 16.♕g4 ♗xg5 17.hxg5 ♘xc3! (not giving White the time to jump with his f3 knight to e5) 18.bxc3 ♗xf3 19.♕xf3 ♘d5 with an equal game in Sokolov-Van den Doel, Dutch Championship, Leeuwarden 2002.

B) The other plan is to transfer the c4 bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal, where it will be an essential piece for the attack on the black king: 12.♗d3 ♘cb4 13.♗b1 and now:

B1) A logical plan for Black is to place his bishop on b7 with 13...b6 14.♘e5 ♗b7, and then the best option for White is to follow a well-known attacking plan:

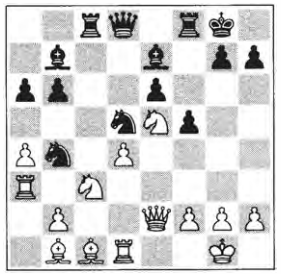


analysis diagram

15.♖a3!. Transferring the rook to the kingside, with, characteristically, a sharp struggle ahead. It is important to note that this rook transfer is one of the specifics related to the isolated pawn-positions with the white pawn on a4.

It may seem like a clever idea to first jump to the centre with the c3 knight with 15.♘e4? and only then execute the ♖a3-g3 transfer. However, Black then has a typical reaction which is worth remembering, since it mostly works in these positions: 15...f5! 16.♘c3 ♖c8 17.♖a3??.

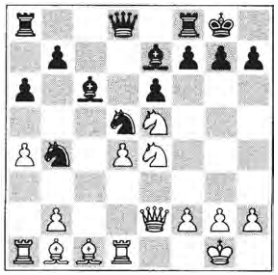
Now, two moves too late, this is a terrible blunder.



analysis diagram

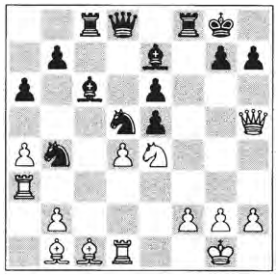
17...♘c2! 18.♖a2 (18.♗xc2 simply loses an exchange after 18...♗xa3 19.♘xd5 ♕xd5). With the text White hopes that Black has nothing better than a move repetition with 18...♘cb4 19.♖a3. Well, sadly for White there is a nice tactical solution in this position: 18...♘xd4! 19.♕e1 (Black remains a healthy pawn up in the ending after 19.♖xd4 ♘xc3 20.bxc3 ♕xd4 21.cxd4 ♖xc1+ 22.♕f1 ♖xf1+ 23.♔xf1) 19...♘b3 and with an extra pawn and a much better position, Black soon won in Malaniuk-Yakovich, Moscow 1992.

B2) 13...♗d7 14.♘e5 ♗c6 15.♘e4 and here Black has to be careful.



analysis diagram

B21) A logical-looking developing move like 15...♖c8? could lead to disaster after 16.♖a3! (this thematic rook transfer is extremely strong here. White is attacking with literally all his pieces now and Black is in serious trouble) 16..f6 (16...♘f6 does not help any longer due to 17.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 18.♗xh7+! (a typical motif here) 18...♔xh7 19.♕h5+ ♔g8 20.♖h3 and White delivers mate) 17.♕h5! and Black is mated after 17...fxe5 (17...g6 loses 18.♘xg6)



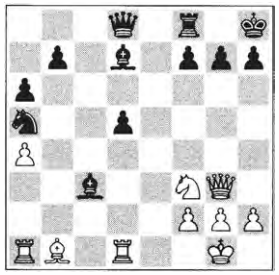
analysis diagram

18.♕xh7+!! ♔f7 (or 18...♔xh7 19.♘f6+ ♔h8 20.♖h3 mate) 19.♘d6+! (the b1 bishop must be involved in the action) 19...♗xd6 20.♗g6+ ♔f6 21.♗g5+! ♔xg5 22.♖g3+ ♔f6 23.♕h4 mate;

B22) 15...♘f6! 16.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 17.♖a3 g6 18.♗h6 ♖e8 19.♖g3 and White has attacking potential on the kingside, Spassky-Pachman, Manila Interzonal 1976. Once more I would advise the reader to note and remember the importance of the rook transfer a1-a3-g3, since this is a standard attacking plan for White here.

12. ... ♘c6-b4

12...♘f6, harassing the white queen, has been played frequently here. However, White seems to be able to run away with his queen and get some advantage. Perhaps a good example is the game Marin-Ibragimov, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1993, which continued 13.♕h4 ♘d5 14.♕g3 ♔h8 15.♗b3 ♘a5?! (a risky concept. Better was 15...♘cb4 in order to control the d5-square and not to allow the transfer of the b3 bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal) 16.♗a2 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♗d7 18.♗f4 ♖c8 19.♗b1! (as mentioned earlier, White's light-squared bishop placed on the b1-h7 diagonal is an essential piece for the attack) 19...♖xc3 20.d5! exd5 21.♗e5 ♗f6 22.♗xc3 ♗xc3

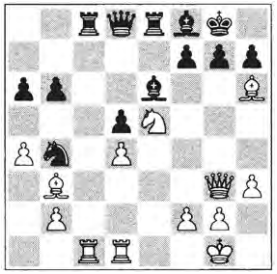


analysis diagram

23.♘g5! (energetically played, not giving Black a break to consolidate) 23...♗f6 (23...♗xa1?? loses to the well-known tactical motif 24.♕h4 h6 25.♘xf7+) 24.♘xh7 ♖e8 25.♘xf6

♕xf6 26.♖a3 and White is a sound exchange up, keeping the initiative;

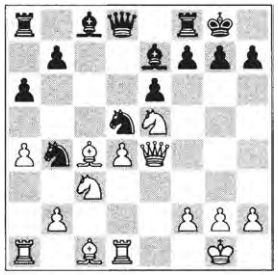
B) Another good example of how play may continue is the game Polugaevsky-Hort, Manila Interzonal 1976: 14.♕g4 ♘f6 15.♕g3 ♘h5 16.♕h3 ♘f6 (finally the white queen is not under attack, so it's time to develop pieces) 17.♗g5 ♘b4 18.♕g3 ♖e8 19.♘e5 ♘fd5 20.♗h6 ♗f8 21.♖ac1 b6 (this weakens the c6-square and allows White to change the pawn structure, achieving (as we saw in several previous examples) the upper hand with a pawn symmetry in the centre. I think that it was better for Black not to weaken the c6-square in his camp and play 21...♗d7 instead) 22.♘xd5! exd5 23.♗b3 ♗e6 24.h3 ♖c8



analysis diagram

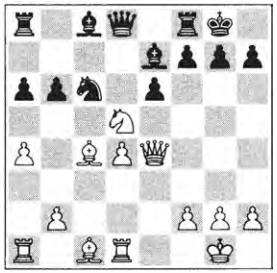
25.♖xc8 (here White could have decided on a different (and, for Black, more unpleasant) strategic concept, as mentioned in the comments on the 7th move in my own game against Simutowe, with 25.♖c3!. Black has a difficult life here, since the rook on c3 cannot be taken, while at the same time White threatens to build on his positional pressure. Under the circumstances it looks sensible for Black to at least kick out White's dominant e5 knight with 25...f6, but White has an unpleasant initiative after 26.♘g4) 25...♕xc8 26.♗f4 ♕b7 27.♘g4 and White had some advantage.

13. ♘f3-e5



13. ... ♖a8-a7

Black is getting ready to play ...b7-b6 and then ...♗c8-b7, completing his development. A logical question is: why waste time on 13...♖a7 and not play 13...b6 immediately? Black's problem is that after 13...b6 White has a nice tactical solution in 14.♘c6!, and after 14...♘xc6 (White is clearly better in case of 14...♘xc3?! 15.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 16.bxc3 ♗b7 17.♕g4 ♖fc8 18.♗g5) 15.♘xd5



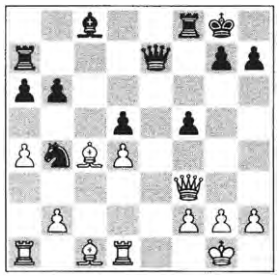
analysis diagram

15...♖a7! (the best defence; 15...exd5 simply loses a pawn after 16.♗xd5 ♗g4 17.f3! (not 17.♖e1? ♗d7! 18.♗xc6

♗xc6 19.♕xc6 ♕xd4 with equality) 17...♗d7 18.♗xc6 ♗xc6 19.♕xc6 ♖c8 20.♕e4 ♗f6 21.♗e3 ♖e8 22.♕d3, while White has a clear endgame advantage in the case of 15...♗b7 16.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17.d5! (direct and strong) 17...exd5 (17...♘a5? is a blunder which simply loses a pawn after 18.♗d3 g6 19.♗h6 ♖fe8 20.♕d4 e5 21.♕xb6, while after 17...♘b4 18.♕e2 ♖ad8 19.dxe6 ♖xd1+ 20.♕xd1 fxe6 21.♗e3, the problems related to Black's damaged pawn structure would soon begin to tell) 18.♗xd5 ♕xe4 19.♗xe4) 16.♗d3! (an important intermezzo. Black would gradually equalize after 16.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 17.♗g5 ♕d7! 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.d5 exd5 20.♗xd5 ♕f6) 16...f5 17.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 18.♕e2, White keeps a small, lasting advantage. The move played by Spassky eliminates the ♘c6 tactic, but also loses precious time.

14. ♗c4-b3

White is preparing to take ♘c3xd5 at a suitable moment. Another rather logical continuation is to aim directly at the black king with 14.♕g4. After 14...♔h8 (a preventive move. Wrong is 14...f5?, since after 15.♕f3 b6 16.♘xd5! exd5 17.♘c6 (17.♗b3 is also good) 17...♕d7 18.♘xe7+ ♕xe7



analysis diagram

19.♗b3! White has a massive advantage. It is important to note that keeping the bishop pair and exploiting the weaknesses in Black's position is much better than taking the pawn on d5) 15.♕h5 ♕e8 16.♘xd5 (otherwise 16...f6) 16...exd5 17.♗d3 ♘xd3 18.♘xd3 b6

analysis diagram

19.♖e1. A pawn structure transformation – already seen many times in this book – has taken place and White has a pleasant advantage. Thanks to his bishop pair Black should have reasonable compensation should White decide to take a pawn – and open the light-square diagonals – with 19.♕xd5.

14. ... ♘d5-f6

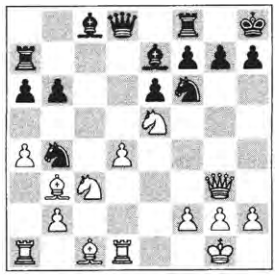
In the event of 14...b6, White transforms the pawn structure in the centre with 15.♘xd5 and he will enjoy all the advantages of the 'central pawn symmetry/ upper hand-position' after 15...exd5 16.♕f3.

15. ♕e4-h4 b7-b6

Black is going to finish his development by placing the c8 bishop on the long diagonal and it seems that he has a good game. Petrosian now develops and keeps the initiative in a masterful way, playing with great power.

16. ♕h4-g3! ♗c8-b7

In case of the preventive 16...♔h8, White would get a clear advantage after the nice and strong:



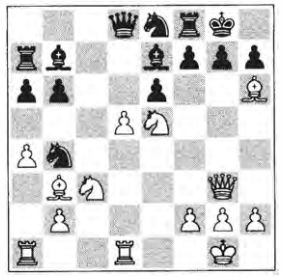
analysis diagram

17.♗e3! ♗b7 18.d5! ♘bxd5 19.a5.

17. ♗c1-h6 ♘f6-e8

18. ♖a1-c1

Preparing the central break. It should be noted that the immediate 18.d5!? was possible, but would lead to an unclear game:

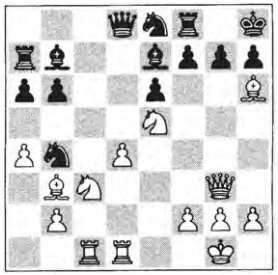


analysis diagram

18...♘xd5 19.♘xd5 (or 19.♖d4 ♗f6; 19...♗d6 is less good, since White is clearly better after 20.♘xd5 ♗xd5 21.♗xd5 ♗xe5 22.♕xe5 exd5 23.♖xd5 ♖d7 24.♖xd7 ♕xd7 25.♗e3) 19...exd5 20.♖d4 ♗f6 21.♖e1 ♘d6 22.♗xd5 ♕e7.

18. ... ♔g8-h8

It seems that now after 19.♗e3 ♘f6, Black will have a good game. However, White has a strong and energetic solution:

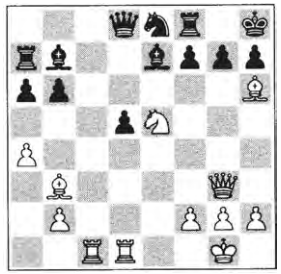


19. d4-d5!

Beautiful and highly instructive. With all his pieces harmoniously developed, White is ready for this central break. This is a typical intuitive sacrifice. Petrosian rightly judges that in the ensuing complications the tactics will work for him.

19. ... e6xd5

19...♘xd5 loses to the spectacular 20.♘xd5 exd5



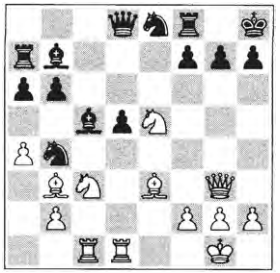
analysis diagram

21.♖c7!! gxh6 (only move, since 21...♕xc7 loses to 22.♗xg7+ ♘xg7 23.♘xf7+ ♖xf7 24.♕xc7 and Black loses more material) 22.♖d7 ♗h4 23.♖xd8 ♗xg3 24.hxg3 (due to his terrible piece coordination, removing the queens from the board does not

help Black) 24...♔g7 25.♖d7! ♘f6 26.♖e7 – despite being a pawn up, Black is completely tied up and has a hopeless position here.

20. ♗h6-e3! ♖a7-a8

In the case of 20...♗c5 White remains a pawn up:

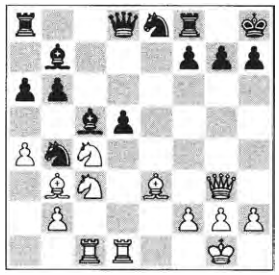


analysis diagram

21.♘xd5! ♗xd5 22.♖xc5! bxc5 23.♗xc5 ♘f6 24.♗xa7.

21. ♘e5-c4! ♘e8-d6

In the event of 21...♘f6 White is much better after the simple 22.♘xb6 ♖b8 23.a5, while in reply to 21...♗c5 White has a nice tactic again:



analysis diagram

22.♘a5! bxa5 23.♗xc5 ♖g8 24.♗xb4 axb4 25.♘xd5, with a winning advantage.

In all these lines, there is a striking difference in coordination between the white and the black pieces.

22. ♗e3xb6 ♕d8-b8

23. ♘c4-a5

Also good was 23.♘e3, and White has a winning advantage after 23...♖c8 24.♗d4 ♗f8 25.♘cxd5.

23. ... ♘d6-f5

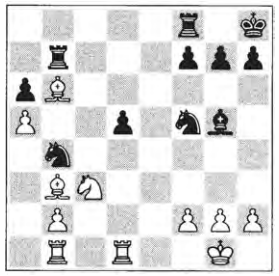
By exchanging queens, Black hopes to make his troubles more bearable.

24. ♕g3xb8 ♖a8xb8

25. ♘a5xb7 ♖b8xb7

26. a4-a5 ♗e7-g5

27. ♖c1-b1



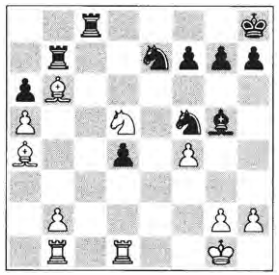
Reaching the ending has not solved any of Black's troubles. Petrosian's execution is flawless. The difference in coordination between the white and black forces remains as striking as ever.

27. ... d5-d4

28. ♘c3-d5 ♘b4-c6

29. ♗b3-a4! ♖f8-c8

30. f2-f4! ♘c6-e7



31. ♖b1-c1!

Not giving Black the slightest chance of survival. A highly instructive combination of tactical and technical motifs in the execution.

31. ... ♖c8-b8

32. f4xg5 ♘e7xd5

33. ♗a4-c6 ♖b7xb6

34. a5xb6 ♘d5-e3

35. b6-b7

35.♗d7 also wins easily, for instance: 35...♘xd1 36.♗xf5 ♘e3 37.b7 and the pawn queens.

35. ... ♘e3xd1

36. ♖c1xd1 g7-g6

37. g2-g4! ♘f5-g7

38. ♖d1xd4 ♘g7-e6

39. ♖d4-d7 1-0

A great game by Petrosian.

QG 11.14 (D27) **GAME 33**

Vladimir Kramnik

Viswanathan Anand

Dos Hermanas 1999 (3)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5

2. c2-c4 d5xc4

3. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6

4. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6

5. ♗f1xc4 c7-c5

6. 0-0 a7-a6

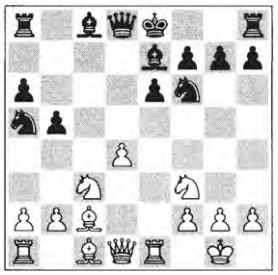
7. ♗c4-b3 c5xd4

8. e3xd4 ♘b8-c6

9. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7

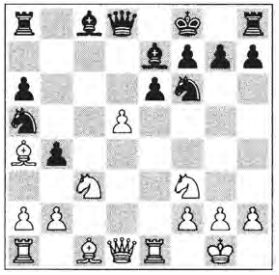
10. ♖f1-e1 0-0

Kramnik has vast experience in this line, his game against Karpov (Frankfurt rapid 1999) also being very instructive. Anatoly Karpov tried to find an improved move order for Black and played 10...♘a5 11.♗c2 b5. Now Kramnik correctly felt that the position required immediate, energetic action and proceeded with:



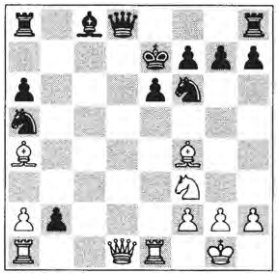
analysis diagram

12.d5! (in this sharp struggle White's initiative is very strong) 12...b4 (searching for active counterplay. Taking the pawn on d5 is not good either: 12...exd5 13.♗g5 ♗e6 (13...0-0?? is a terrible blunder due to 14.♕d3 g6 15.♖xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘xd5) 14.♘d4 and Black's position will soon collapse; or 12...♘xd5 13.♘xd5 ♕xd5 14.♗d2! ♘c6 (14...♘b7 loses to 15.♗e4 ♕d6 16.♕c2! ♕c5 17.♕xc5 ♗xc5 18.♖ac1 and White wins material) 15.♗e4 ♕d6 16.♕c2 (16.♗c3 gives White an advantage in the endgame after 16...♕xd1 17.♖axd1 ♗b7 18.♗xg7 ♖g8 19.♗c3 f5 20.♗c2 ♘a5 21.♔f1 b4 22.♗e5) 16...♗b7 17.♖ad1 and White's initiative is worth much more than a pawn) 13.♗a4+ ♔f8



analysis diagram

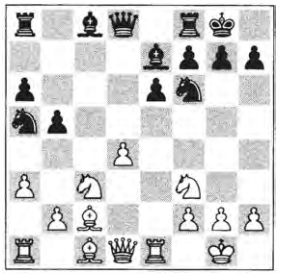
14.♗f4! bxc3 15.d6 ♘d5 (Black has no good options left, since 15...cxb2 16.dxe7+ ♔xe7...



analysis diagram

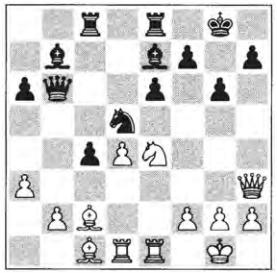
... meets with 17.♕c2! ♗d7 18.♕xb2! ♗xa4 19.♕b4+ ♔e8 20.♕xa4+ ♔f8 21.♖ad1 and Black loses his knight on a5, for example: 21...♘d5 22.♗g5 ♕c7 23.♖c1 ♕b6 24.♖b1 ♕c5 25.♖ec1) 16.dxe7+ ♕xe7 17.♗e5 ♗b7 18.bxc3 ♖d8 19.♘d4 (in a difficult position the 12th World Champion suffers a tactical oversight) 19...♘c4? 20.♗xg7+ ♔xg7 21.♘f5+ exf5 22.♖xe7 ♘xe7 23.♕e2 and White soon won, since Black is not able to protect his knights.

11. a2-a3 ♘c6-a5
12. ♗b3-c2 b7-b5



13. d4-d5!

White sacrifices a pawn in order to obtain an outpost on d4 for his knight and disturb Black's natural piece development. In one of my own games, I opted for a traditional attacking set-up in an isolated pawn position with 13.♕d3 ♗b7 14.♗g5 g6 15.♖ad1 ♖c8 16.♘e5. My opponent, Danish grandmaster Curt Hansen, exploited the deficiencies of my set-up well with 16...♘c4! (first exchanging the attacking knight on e5) 17.♘xc4 bxc4! (and then recapturing correctly with a pawn, closing the a2-g8 diagonal) 18.♕h3 ♘d5 19.♗h6 ♖e8 20.♘e4 ♕b6 (hitting White's newly-created weakness) 21.♗c1



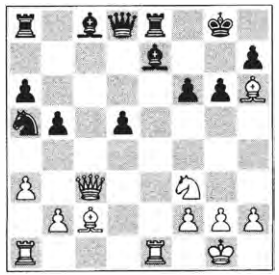
analysis diagram

21...f5! (a timely, well-executed ...f7-f5 often removes the last glimmer of hope of a white attack in such positions) 22.♘c3 ♗f6 – Black was better and I was fortunate to draw this game, Sokolov-C. Hansen, Malmö 1998.

13. ... ♖f8-e8!

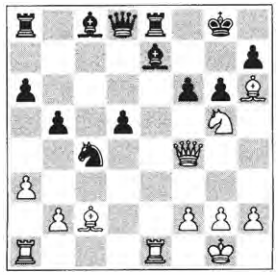
A good, cool reaction. Black takes care of the development and coordination of his pieces, making it difficult for White to develop an initiative. Taking the d5 pawn gives White the opportunity to capitalize on the horribly misplaced black knight on a5 and set up a swift attack on the black king.

A) One nice, instructive example I found went 13...♘xd5 14.♘xd5 exd5 15.♕d3 g6 16.♗h6 ♖e8 17.♕c3! (forcing Black to further weaken his kingside) 17...f6



analysis diagram

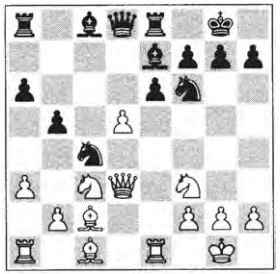
18.♘h4! (threatening with immediate annihilation by 19.♘xg6) 18...♔f7 19.♕g3 ♖g8 20.♘f3! (the knight has done its job on h4 and now is the time to create new tactical motifs) 20...♘c4 (Black tries to get his stranded a5 knight back into play, but it's too late) 21.♕f4 ♖e8 (21...♕d6 22.♕h4, with 23.♗f4 to follow, is also unpleasant for Black) 22.♘g5+ ♔g8



analysis diagram

23.♘xh7! (time to storm the barricades) 23...♔xh7 24.♕h4 ♗f5 (perhaps the best for Black was to suffer in a difficult endgame after 24...♖h8 25.♗f8+ ♔g8 26.♗xe7 ♕c7! 27.♕g3 ♕xg3 28.fxg3 ♔f7 29.♗c5) 25.♗xf5 gxf5 26.♖e6! (White coolly brings more pieces on, increasing the pressure) 26...♔g6 27.♖ae1 ♖a7 28.♕g5+ 1-0, P.H. Nielsen-Bentzen, Denmark tt 1999.

B) The other way for Black, similar to Anand's reaction, is to leave the white pawn on d5 as it is and bring the a5 knight back into play with 13...♘c4 – a logical reaction in itself which, however, does not solve Black's problems after 14.♕d3 ♖e8



analysis diagram

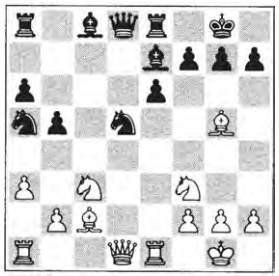
15.a4! (a strong move, highlighting the drawbacks of 13...♘c4) 15...exd5 16.axb5 a5 17.b3 ♘b6 18.♘d4 (the strong knight on d4 ensures White an advantage here; take note of Black's weak pawn on d5, which is clumsily standing in the way of any active black counterplay) 18...♗b7 19.f3 ♖c8 20.♘a4 ♗f8 21.♗g5 and White was clearly better in Kasparov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1999.

14. ♗c1-g5

14.♕d3, forcing 14...g6, has also been tried, but it brought White no more than equality. Black is still not disturbed by the white pawn hanging on d5 and simply improves his position. Staying cool, making constructive moves in the face of White's seemingly dangerous pawn on d5, is often important for Black in these positions: 15.b4 ♘c4 16.dxe6 ♗xe6 17.♘d4 ♗d5, Illescas Cordoba-Anand, Dos Hermanas 1999.

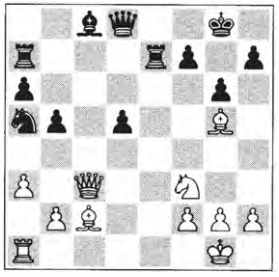
14. ... h7-h6

Somewhere around here Black probably made a mistake. The text is definitely logical, but, as seen further on, it gives White some extra attacking possibilities. The other critical move for the assessment of this position is the immediate 14...♘xd5.



analysis diagram

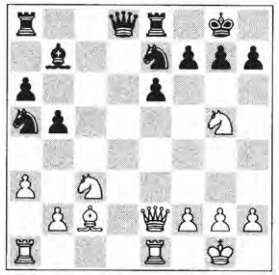
A) 15.♘xd5 exd5! (15...♗xg5 16.♘xg5 ♕xg5 looks better for White after 17.♕d3 g6 18.♕c3! ♕xd5 19.♗e4) 16.♖xe7 ♖xe7 17.♕d3! (the principled way to continue; 17.♗xe7 ♕xe7 18.♕xd5 ♗b7 19.♕d3 g6 20.♖e1 ♕f6 21.♘e5 ♖e8 is slightly better for Black) 17...g6 18.♕c3 ♖aa7.



analysis diagram

This messy position could be critical for this variation and needs to be analysed.

B) 15.♗xe7, and now the best way for Black to proceed seems to me to be 15...♘xe7! (in the case of 15...♖xe7 White has a dangerous attack after 16.♘g5 g6 17.♕d4 ♗b7 18.♕h4 h5 19.♖ad1) 16.♕e2 (Black should be at least equal after 16.♘g5 ♕xd1! 17.♗xh7+ ♔f8 18.♖axd1 ♘c4) 16...♗b7! (Black comes under attack after 16...♘g6 17.♖ad1 ♕e7 18.♗xg6! hxg6 19.♘d5 ♕a7 20.♘g5) 17.♘g5

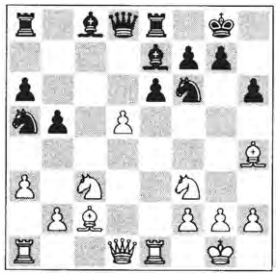


analysis diagram

17...h6! (don't be afraid of ghosts!) 18.♗h7+ ♔f8 19.♘xf7 ♔xf7 20.♕xe6+ ♔f8 21.♖ad1 ♕c8! 22.♖d7 ♕c6 23.♕g4 h5 24.♕f4+ (only move) 24...♕f6 25.♕b4 ♖ac8 and Black repels the attack, 26.♕xa5?? being a horrible blunder due to 26...♘c6.

Finally, instead of the text move, 14...♘c4?! would allow White to continue his initiative with 15.♘d4!.

15. ♗g5-h4



15. ... ♘f6xd5?

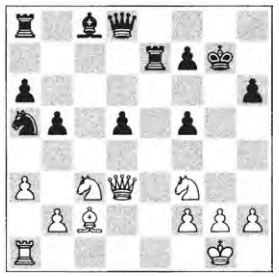
Probably a crucial mistake that will ultimately cost Black the game.

A) 15...♘c4? is again wrong due to 16.♘d4, for example: 16...♘xd5 (16...♘xb2? loses to 17.♕c1 ♘c4 18.♘c6 ♕c7 19.♘xe7+ ♕xe7 20.♘e4) 17.♕d3 g6 18.♘c6 ♕d7 19.♘xe7+ ♘xe7 20.♕xd7 (20.♕h3 also looks good for White) 20...♗xd7 21.♗xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘d5 and White wins an exchange;

B) 15...exd5! looks very risky, but could in fact be critical here, since it is far from easy to find anything clear for White. Let me give a few lines:

B1) 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 18.♘xd5 ♕d8 19.♕d3 g6 20.♖e1 ♔g7 with an approximately equal game; even 20...♗b7!? 21.♖e8+ ♔g7 22.♖xd8 ♖xd8 comes into consideration;

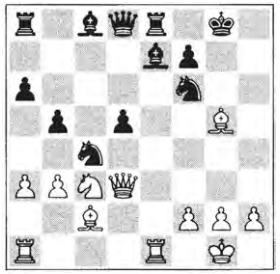
B2) 16.♖xe7 ♖xe7! (not 16...♕xe7? 17.♘xd5 ♕d8 18.♘xf6+! gxf6 19.♕c1! ♔g7 20.♕f4 ♖a7 21.♕g3+ ♔h8 (even worse is 21...♔f8 22.♗h7) 22.♘e5! ♖xe5 23.♕xe5 fxe5 24.♗xd8 and White should win this endgame) 17.♗xf6 gxf6 18.♕d2 ♔g7 19.♕d3 f5.



analysis diagram

White's attack looks promising, but it is difficult to find anything concrete: 20.♘xd5 ♖e6 21.♕c3+ ♔g8 22.♖d1 ♖d6! 23.♕d4 ♘c4 24.♗b3 ♗e6! 25.♗xc4 bxc4 26.♘e7+ (26.♘f6+? ♕xf6) 26...♕xe7 27.♕xd6 ♕xd6 28.♖xd6 ♖b8 and Black is better, since 29.♖d2?? is a terrible blunder which loses immediately to 29...c3;

B3) Another interesting line is 16.♕d3 g5! (courageous and strong) 17.♘xg5! (a principled reaction, in the spirit of the position) 17...hxg5 18.♗xg5 ♘c4! 19.♕g3 (19.b3 looks like one of those 'little moves' that can throw Black off balance, but it does not achieve more than an approximately equal ending:



analysis diagram

19...♘xa3! 20.♘xd5! (20.♕g3 ♘h5) 20...♕xd5 21.♗xf6 ♕xd3 22.♗xd3 ♖d8! 23.♗xe7 ♖xd3 24.♖xa3 ♗e6) 19...♘h5 20.♕h4 (continuing in style. Black has reasonable counterplay in the ending after 20.♗xe7+ ♘xg3 21.♗xd8 ♖xd8 22.hxg3 d4) 20...♗xg5 21.♖xe8+ ♕xe8 22.♕xg5+ ♘g7 23.♘xd5 ♕e5 24.♘f6+ ♔f8 25.♘h7+ ♔g8 (wrong is 25...♔e8? 26.♕xe5+ ♘xe5 27.♖e1 ♗e6 28.♖xe5 ♖c8 29.♖e2) 26.♘f6+ (White may go one step too far by playing 26.♕h6 f5) 26...♔f8 and a draw by perpetual check concludes this beautiful variation.

16. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5

More or less forced. 16...♗xh4? is not good, since after 17.♕d3! f5 (Black gets mated in case of 17...♔f8?? 18.♘xh4 ♗b7 19.♕h7 ♕xd5 20.♖ad1 ♕c6 (or 20...♕c5 21.♖d7) 21.♕h8+ ♔e7 22.♘f5+ ♔f6 23.♕xg7 mate, while 17...g6? loses to 18.♘xh4 exd5 19.♘xg6 or 18...♕xh4 19.♕c3!) 18.♘xh4 ♗b7! (best under the circumstances. 18...♕xh4? loses more material after 19.♘c7 ♖d8 20.♕c3) 19.♘xf5! ♕xd5 (19...exf5? loses to the prosaic 20.♘e7+ ♖xe7 21.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♖xe7) 20.♘xh6+! ♔f8 (20...gxh6? loses the queen after 21.♕g6+ ♔f8 22.♕xh6+ ♔e7 23.♕g7+ ♔d6 24.♖ad1 ♖g8 25.♕e5+) 21.♕xd5 ♗xd5 22.♘g4 and White is a sound pawn up in the endgame.

17. ♕d1-d3 g7-g6

18. ♕d3-e3

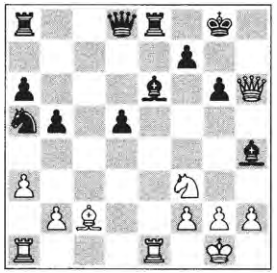
White wants to capitalize on the fact that there is a pawn hanging on h6. Also very promising was 18.♖xe7 ♖xe7 19.♕d2! (making use of the fact that the black pawn is on h6) 19...♘c4 (19...g5? 20.♘xg5) 20.♕xh6 ♕f8 21.♕f4 and White is clearly better.

18. ... ♗c8-e6

The best defence. 18...g5?? loses quickly to 19.♕d3! f5 20.♗g3 ♘c4 21.♘d4 (the black king is too exposed, without any pieces to protect him) 21...♘xb2 22.♕e2 ♗d7 23.♕h5 ♕b6 24.♘e6 and Black gets mated.

18...♘c6? does not help either, since after the simple 19.♕xh6 ♗f8 (19...♗xh4? loses to 20.♗xg6! fxg6 21.♕xg6+ ♔f8 22.♕xc6 ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 ♖b8 24.♕h6+) 20.♕d2 White has regained his sacrificed pawn, while his attack continues.

19. ♕e3xh6 ♗e7xh4



20. ♗c2xg6! ♕d8-f6!

Only move. 20...fxg6? loses to 21.♕xg6+ ♔f8 22.♕h6+ ♔f7 (or 22...♔g8? 23.♖xe6+−) 23.♕h7+ ♔f6 24.♘xh4 ♕d7 25.♕g6+ ♔e7 26.♘f5+ ♔f8 (or 26...♔d8 27.♘g7) 27.♘h6 ♕g7 28.♖xe6 ♕xg6 29.♖xg6 and White is two healthy pawns up.

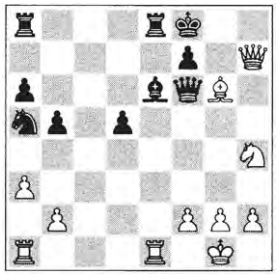
20...♗f6? is bad due to the simple 21.♖xe6 fxg6 22.♕xg6+ ♗g7 23.♘g5, winning.

21. ♗g6-h7+ ♔g8-h8

22. ♗h7-g6+ ♔h8-g8

23. ♕h6-h7+ ♔g8-f8

24. ♘f3xh4



24. ... ♕f6-g7?!

Having struggled for quite some time in a difficult position, Anand misses the best practical defence – and the chance to stay in the game –, which was probably to take the pawn with 24...♕xb2!. White has the upper hand, but things are far from clear:

A) Black is very much in the game after 25.♕h6+ ♕g7 26.♕f4 ♔g8 27.♗f5 (or 27.♗d3 ♕g4) 27...♖ac8! (not 27...♘c4? 28.♖ad1) 28.♘f3 ♖c4 ;

B) The straightforward 25.♘f5? does not work after 25...fxg6 26.♕h6+ ♔f7 27.♘d6+ ♔e7 28.♘xe8 ♖xe8 29.♕xg6 ♕f6 and Black is better;

C) 25.♗f5! ♕f6 26.♖ad1 ♗xf5 (26...♘c4?? is a terrible blunder due to 27.♗xe6 ♖xe6 28.♖xe6 fxe6 29.♘g6+ ♔e8 30.♕g8+) 27.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 28.♘xf5 ♘c4 29.g4! ♖e5 30.♖d3.

25. ♕h7xg7+ ♔f8xg7

26. ♗g6-d3

White is a sound pawn up and in the hands of Kramnik this means that the game is more or less decided. It is nice to enjoy Vladimir's technique, but as far as understanding isolated pawn-positions is concerned, the game is over. I give the rest with very limited comments.

26. ... ♘a5-c4

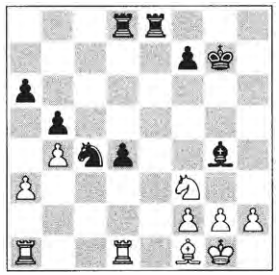
27. b2-b4 ♘c4-b2

28. ♗d3-f1 d5-d4

29. ♘h4-f3 ♖a8-d8

30. ♖e1-b1! ♘b2-c4

31. ♖b1-d1 ♗e6-g4



32. ♖d1-d3!

White is not in the mood to allow drawing chances, which could have been obtained after 32.♖xd4 ♗xf3 33.♖xd8 ♖xd8 34.gxf3 ♘d2 35.♗g2 (or 35.♗e2 ♖e8) 35...♖d3 36.f4 ♘c4.

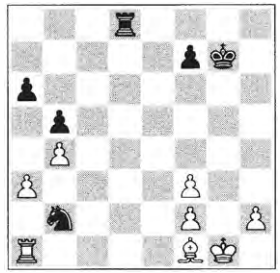
32. ... ♘c4-b2

33. ♖d3xd4 ♗g4xf3

34. ♖d4xd8 ♖e8xd8

35. g2xf3

Now White has taken the black d-pawn under much better circumstances



35. ... ♖d8-c8!

36. ♖a1-a2! ♘b2-a4

In the case of 36...♖c2 the simplest road to victory is 37.a4! bxa4 38.♗xa6, creating a passed pawn.

37. ♖a2-d2 ♖c8-c6

38. f3-f4 ♘a4-b6

39. ♔g1-g2 ♘b6-c4

40. ♖d2-d3 ♘c4-b2

41. ♖d3-g3+ ♔g7-h8

Or 41...♔f6 42.h4.

42. ♗f1-e2 ♖c6-c2

43. ♗e2-h5 ♖c2-c7

44. f4-f5 ♔h8-h7

45. ♗h5-e2

45.f6 or 45.♔f3 should be a simple win.

45. ... ♔h7-h6

46. h2-h4 ♖c7-c2

47. ♗e2-f3 ♘b2-c4

48. ♗f3-d5

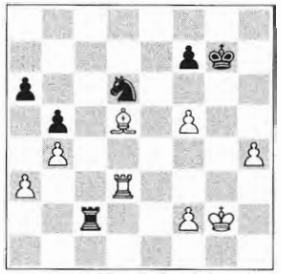
A blunder would have been 48.♗b7? ♘d6 49.♗xa6? ♖c6.

48. ... ♘c4-d6

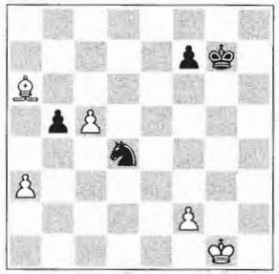
Now 48...♘e5 loses to 49.♗b7.

49. ♖g3-d3! ♔h6-g7

White wins after 49...♘xf5 50.♗b7 ♘xh4+ 51.♔g3 (51.♔g1 should also be enough, but 51.♔h3? ♘g6 probably is not) 51...♘f5+ 52.♔f3 ♘h4+ 53.♔e3 ♘f5+ 54.♔e4 ♖xf2 55.♗xa6.



50. ♗d5-f3! ♘d6xf5
51. ♗f3-b7 ♘f5xh4+
52. ♔g2-g1 ♖c2-e2
53. ♗b7xa6 ♖e2-e5
54. ♖d3-c3 ♘h4-f5
55. ♖c3-c5 ♖e5xc5
56. b4xc5 ♘f5-d4



57. c5-c6!

White forces Black to fight against the passer that the knight has the most difficulty to cope with: the one on the rook file.

57. ... ♘d4xc6
58. ♗a6xb5 ♘c6-a5
59. ♔g1-g2 ♔g7-f6
60. ♔g2-f3 ♔f6-e5
61. ♔f3-e3 ♘a5-b7
62. ♗b5-c4 f7-f6

Even more hopeless for Black would be 62...f5 63.f4+ ♔d6 64.♗d3 ♔e6 65.♔d4.

63. a3-a4 ♘b7-a5
64. ♗c4-f7 ♘a5-c6
65. ♔e3-d3 ♔e5-d6
66. ♔d3-e4 ♘c6-e7
67. a4-a5 ♔d6-c5
68. a5-a6 ♘e7-c8

68...♔b6 loses to 69.♗c4 ♔a7 70.♔f4 ♔b6 71.♔g4 ♔a7 72.♔h5 ♔b6 73.♔h6 and White eventually collects Black's f-pawn.

69. ♗f7-h5!

White's bishop, combined with the extra a-pawn, is easily dominating the black knight.

69. ... ♔c5-d6

Or 69...♔b6 70.♗e2.

70. ♗h5-f3 1-0

Black's situation is hopeless, for example: 70...♘a7 71.♔d4 ♘c8 72.♗b7 ♘a7 73.♔c4 or 70...♔c6 71.♔f5+ ♔b6 72.♗b7.

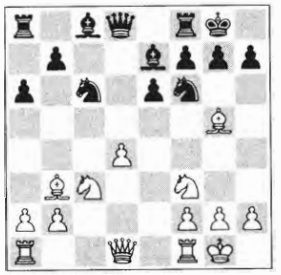
QG 11.14 (D27) **GAME 34**

Vladimir Kramnik
Viswanathan Anand
Dortmund 2001 (9)

1. d2-d4 d7-d5
2. c2-c4 d5xc4
3. ♘g1-f3 e7-e6
4. e2-e3 ♘g8-f6
5. ♗f1xc4 c7-c5
6. 0-0 a7-a6
7. ♗c4-b3 c5xd4
8. e3xd4 ♘b8-c6
9. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
10. ♗c1-g5

In two previous examples (Kramnik-Hübner, Game 30 and Kramnik-Anand, Game 33) we have analysed 10.♖e1. The text move is the other main line here. Note that Kramnik has taken his time to thoroughly analyse this position and a considerable part of his success came as a result of his superb understanding of isolated pawn-positions.

10. ... 0-0



11. ♕d1-d2!

As we see, White is not going to follow a traditional type of isolated pawn attack (♖e1, a3, ♗c2, ♕d3), but has a rather fresh idea in mind.

11. ... ♘c6-a5

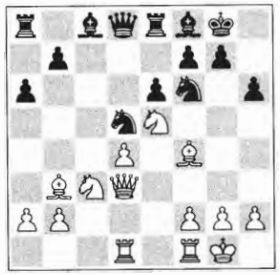
Black has tried two other natural continuations, but both fail to equalize:

A) 11...h6 and now:

A1) The idea to eliminate the f6 knight and try to create threats on the b1-h7 diagonal, does not work here: 12.♗xf6?! ♗xf6 13.♖ad1 ♘a5 14.♗c2 b5 15.b3 ♗b7 16.♘e4 ♖c8 17.♗b1 ♗xe4 18.♗xe4 ♘c6 19.♖fe1 ♘e7 20.♗b1 ♘d5 21.♕d3 g6 and Black was slightly better in Gelfand-Shirov, New Delhi rapid 2000;

A2) 12.♗h4, on the other hand, is a rather logical move and I am surprised that it has not been tried on grandmaster level. Should Black decide to follow our main game idea with 12...♘a5 13.♗c2 b5, the vulnerability of the g6-square (resulting from 11...h7-h6) would be immediately felt after 14.♕d3 g6 15.♘e5;

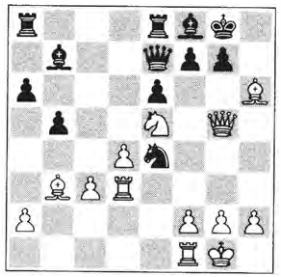
A3) 12.♗f4 ♖e8 13.♖ad1 ♗f8 14.♘e5 ♘e7 15.♕d3 (White is now setting up a classical isolated pawn attack) 15...♘ed5



analysis diagram

16.♗c1 (16.♘xd5 is another way to proceed here, giving White advantage after 16...♘xd5 (in the event of 16...exd5 White will have a pleasant and risk-free advantage after 17.♗a4! b5 18.♗c2 – the knight on e5 is very dominant, while the attacking possibilities along the b1-h7 diagonal

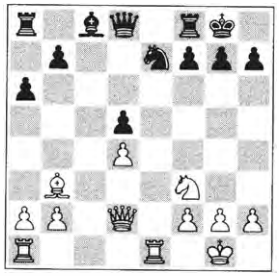
remain) 17.♗c2 f5 18.♕g3 ♘xf4 (or 18...♕f6 19.♗b3) 19.♕xf4 ♗d6 20.♖fe1 a5 21.h4 and White was definitely better in Barsov-Lesiège, Montreal 2002) 16...b5 17.♕g3 ♗b7 (Black hopes to have enough tactical resources to withstand the attack) 18.♗xh6 ♘xc3 19.bxc3 ♘e4 20.♕g4 ♘f6 21.♕g5 (White considers he has more than a draw) 21...♕e7 22.♖d3 (22.♗c2, preventing Black's ...♘e4 drawing mechanism, deserved attention) 22...♘e4



analysis diagram

23.♕g4 (because of his weak c3 pawn, White decides to avoid a pawn-up ending. It was, however, definitely interesting to consider 23.♕xe7 ♖xe7 24.♗f4 and it is not easy for Black to get his pawn back, for instance: 24...♖c8 25.♖c1 ♖ec7 26.c4! g5 27.♗e3 f6? 28.c5 fxe5 29.♗xe6+ ♔g7 30.♗xc8 ♗xc8 31.dxe5 ♗f5 32.c6! ♘xf2 33.♖d7+ ♗xd7 34.cxd7 ♖xd7 35.♔xf2 and White has a won endgame) 23...♘f6 24.♕g5 ♘e4 25.♕g4 ♘f6 with a draw by move repetition, Kramnik-Anand, Mainz 2001. As you have probably noticed, Kramnik and Anand have carried on an extensive debate in the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which went favourable for Kramnik in most cases;

B) 11...♘d5 allows White to steer the game into a 'central pawn symmetry/ upper hand position' after 12.♘xd5 exd5 13.♗xe7 ♘xe7 14.♖fe1.



analysis diagram

As explained before, with the d4/d5 pawn symmetry in the centre and the dark-squared bishops exchanged, the light-squared bishops almost invariably work in White's favour. Here, White also has good control of the e- and c-files and he will put a dominant knight on e5. White has a long-term, risk-free advantage. The 7th match game Leko-Karpov, Miskolc 2006, is a good example:
14...♕d6 15.♖ac1 ♗g4 16.♘e5 ♗f5 17.♖c3 ♖ac8 18.♖ce3 ♘g6 19.♘xg6 hxg6 20.♖e5 ♗e6 21.h4. White has e-file control, with first his knight and now his rook well-placed on e5. White's light-squared bishop heavily dominates its black counterpart here and this plays a crucial role.
This typical position, with the d4/d5 pawn symmetry, the white bishop on b3 or d3, and the black bishop on e6 or b7, occurs very often and almost invariably. White has long-term, risk-free pressure, while Black has very limited to zero counterplay.

12. ♗b3-c2 b7-b5

The immediate 12...♘c4? is a horrible move, since after 13.♕e2 b5?? blunders a rook to 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♕e4.

13. ♕d2-f4!

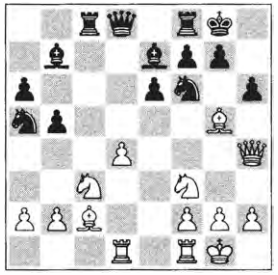
The queen goes to h4 – this is the idea behind 11.♕d2 –, where it will be excellently placed for all sorts of attacking motifs and, above all, to exercise pressure along the h4-d8 diagonal, making the potential d4-d5 thrust rather powerful. This idea in itself does not belong to Kramnik, but, if I am well informed, to Vladislav Tkachiev.

13. ... ♖a8-a7

This rook transfer does not work well here. It takes Black quite some time and meanwhile his pieces remain clumsy.

A) In the stem game, the natural 13...♗b7 was tried. However, White has strong attacking potential and this move does not solve Black's problems: 14.♖ad1.

A1) Black was probably not in a mood to weaken his kingside immediately, but he is having a difficult life. If he starts with the logical 14...♖c8, the white attack will break through after 15.♕h4 h6 (15...g6 runs into the thematic 16.d5! ♗xd5 (16...exd5 is bad due to the simple 17.♖fe1) 17.♘e4! and Black gets mated)



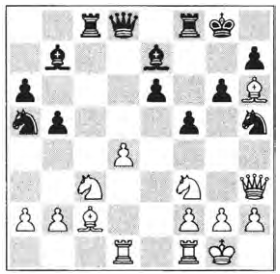
analysis diagram

And now the standard sacrifice 16.♗xh6! gxh6 (16...♗xf3 17.gxf3 changes very little) 17.♕xh6 (the black king is caught in a mating net and once his only defender, the knight on f6, gets eliminated, that will be the end of the game) 17...b4 (the only shot at counterplay) 18.♘e5! ♖xc3 (on 18...bxc3? 19.♖d3 mates) 19.bxc3 ♕d5 20.f3 with 21.♘g4 to follow, and White mates;

A2) Keeping the white queen from the attacking position on h4 with 14...♗xf3, and after 15.♕xf3 trying to get counterplay on the c-file with 15...♖c8, would not work after 16.d5! exd5 (16...♘xd5? simple loses a piece after 17.♕e4 g6 18.♗xe7 ♕xe7 19.♘xd5) 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♖xd5 (the white rook is to be transferred to the h-file and then, with all the white pieces attacking, Black is defenceless) 18...♕b6 19.♖h5 h6 20.♘d5 (20.♖xh6 should also win after 20...gxh6 21.♕f5 ♖fd8 22.♕h7+ ♔f8 23.♕xh6+ ♔e7 24.♖e1+ ♔d7 25.♘d5 ♕d6 26.♗f5+ ♔c6 27.♘xf6 ♖h8 28.♗e4+) 20...♕d6 (20...♕d4 21.♖d1 ♕xb2 22.♖xh6) 21.♖xh6! gxh6 (21...♖xc2? loses immediately to 22.♘xf6+) 22.♘xf6+ ♔g7 23.♕f5 ♖xc2 24.♘h5+ ♔h8 25.♕xc2 and White has won a healthy pawn, while his attack continues;

A3) 14...g6 15.♗h6 ♘h5! (15...♖e8 16.♘e5 is bad for Black – White has terrible pressure on f7) 16.♕g4 f5?! (Black wants to solve his kingside problems in a radical way and also to drive the white queen to h3, where it would be vulnerable to tactics related to Black's ...♘f4 jump. Carrying on chasing the queen with 16...♘f6! 17.♕g3 ♘h5 is a

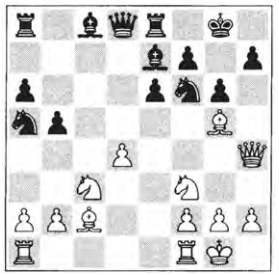
standard QGA motif and could well be good advice here, since it seems that Black holds his own after 18.♕h3 ♖e8 19.♘e5 ♖c8 20.♖fe1! (the threat is 21.♘f7) 20...♗g5! 21.♗xg5 ♕xg5 22.♗e4! (after exchanging the light-squared bishops, the white c3 knight threatens to jump powerfully to e4) 22...♘f6! 23.♕f3 ♖c7) 17.♕h3 ♖c8



analysis diagram

18.d5! (consistent and strong. Naturally White is not in a hurry to take the exchange with 18.♗xf8?, since Black gets a strong attack after 18...♕xf8 19.♗d3 ♘f4 20.♕g3 ♗d6) 18...b4 (desperately hoping for counterplay, but White is one step ahead. If 18...exd5, then simply 19.♘d4 and White has total positional domination and plenty of devastating threats) 19.dxe6 ♗d6 20.♖fe1! ♖e8 21.♗a4! ♖e7 22.♗d7! bxc3 23.♖xd6 cxb2 24.♗g5 and White soon won in Tkachiev-Lesiège, New Delhi/Teheran 2000.

B) Realizing that the ...g7-g6 weakening seems to be almost inevitable, black players have recently resorted to the immediate 13...g6. One instructive example is 14.♕h4 ♖e8!, defending the e7 bishop in order to prevent d4-d5 breaks.



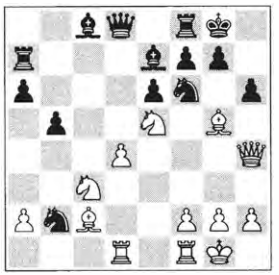
analysis diagram

15.d5! (this principal thrust seems to be working in most of the lines here) 15...♘xd5 16.♘xd5 exd5 17.♖ae1 ♘c6 (not advisable for Black is 17...♗xg5? 18.♘xg5 h5 19.♕g3 with ♘xf7 being a terrible threat, while 17...♖a7!? could be an improvement) 18.♖xe7! ♖xe7 (hanging on to the exchange would be a bad decision, since after the simple 18...♘xe7? 19.♗f6 ♕d6 20.♖e1 ♕c6 21.♗c3! White has a mating attack, for example: 21...f6 22.♘g5! fxg5 23.♕d4) 19.♘e5! ♘xe5 20.♗xe7 ♕c7 21.♗b3 ♗e6 22.♗g5 – Black is certainly missing his dark-squared bishop. Due to the weaknesses around the black king, White has a lasting initiative, probably worth more than a pawn, Bruzon-L. Dominguez, Cuban Championship, Santa Clara 2006.

14. ♖a1-d1 ♗c8-b7

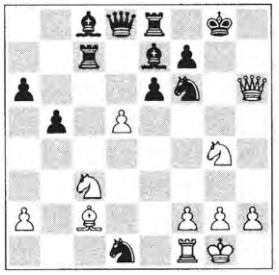
Black's rook on a7 looks clumsy after this move and he is never going to get time for ...♗b7-a8 to bring the rook into play. Black is one tempo away from reaching harmonious development. Energetic action is required by White and Kramnik seizes the moment. As already mentioned, Kramnik and Anand have a long-lasting debate in the Queen's Gambit Accepted and one of their games went:

A) 14...♘c4 15.♘e5! ♖c7 (taking a pawn with 15...♘xb2? would lose after the principled 16.♕h4! (if White forgets about developing his attack and gets greedy with 16.♘c6?, then Black will be OK after 16...♘xd1! 17.♘xd8 ♘xc3 18.♕f3 ♖xd8 19.♕xc3 ♖ad7) 16...h6



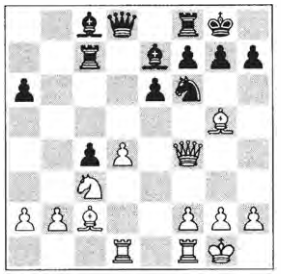
analysis diagram

17.♗xh6! (this standard sacrifice works also here) 17...gxh6 18.♕xh6 ♖c7 19.♘g4! (again, eliminating the only black defender, the knight on f6, is the key) 19..♖e8 20.d5! (adding pressure, after which Black's position collapses) 20...♘xd1 (20...♖xc3?? would voluntarily remove a defender of the f7-square and run into a quick mate: 21.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22.♗h7+ ♔h8 23.♗g6+ ♔g8 24.♕h7+ ♔f8 25.♕xf7 mate)



analysis diagram

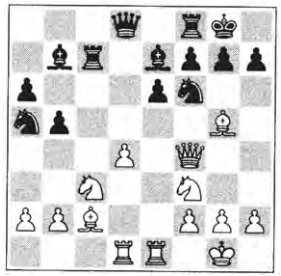
21.d6! (21.♖xd1 should also win) 21...♕xd6 22.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 23.♗h7+! ♔h8 24.♗g6+ ♔g8 25.♘e4! ♕e5 26.♘xf6+ ♕xf6 27.♗h7+ ♔h8 28.♕xf6+) 16.♘xc4! (having a good feeling about the position, Kramnik correctly forces a favourable change of pawn structure) 16...bxc4 (16...♖xc4 allows 17.♗b3)



analysis diagram

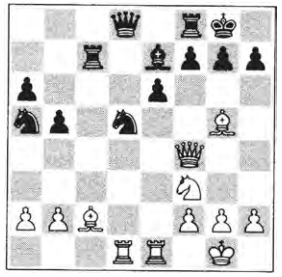
17.♗xf6! ♗xf6 18.d5! (creating a strong passed pawn) 18...e5 19.♕f3 ♖b7 20.♕e4 g6 21.♕xc4 ♖xb2 22.♗b3 ♗g5 23.d6. Now White was clearly better and he won easily in Kramnik-Anand, 3rd match game, Leon man + computer 2002;

B) A logical continuation of Black's plan started with 13...♖a7 would have been 14...♖c7. It is quite possible that the immediate rook transfer to c7 was Anand's original idea, but he simply did not like the position arising after 15.♖fe1 (White's d4-d5 thrust needs some preparation. The immediate 15.d5 would not be that effective, since after 15...exd5 16.♗xf6 ♗xf6 17.♖xd5 ♖d7! 18.♖fd1 ♗xc3 19♖xd7 (19.♗xh7+? ♔xh7 20.♘g5+ ♔g8 21.♕h4 ♖e8) 19...♗xd7 20.bxc3 ♕c8! Black would gradually equalize) 15...♗b7.



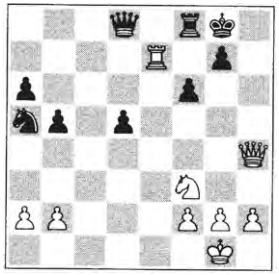
analysis diagram

16.d5! (now this typical temporary pawn sac seems to be rather unpleasant for Black again. Please note that the d4-d5 thrust worked very well in a huge number of lines shown!) 16...♗xd5 (16...exd5?? is very bad; Black immediately gets mated after 17.♖xe7! ♕xe7 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♕g4+ ♔h8 20.♕f5; or 16...♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♗xh7+ (or 18.♖xd5, transposing to the main line) 18...♔xh7 19.♕h4+ ♔g8 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♘g5 ♕xg5 22.♕xg5) 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 (17...exd5? is again bad: 18.♖xe7! ♕xe7 19.♗xf6 gxf6 20.♗f5! and White has a mating attack)



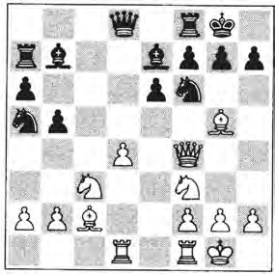
analysis diagram

18.♖xd5! exd5 19.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20.♗xe7 ♖xe7 21.♕h4+ ♔g8 22.♖xe7 f6 (only move; 22...♘c6?? blunders into a mate after 23.♘g5)



analysis diagram

23.♖e1! (23.♖a7 looks active, but Black escapes with 23...♕b6 24.♕d4 ♕xd4 25.♘xd4 ♖c8! 26.g3 ♘c6 27.♘xc6 ♖xc6 into a drawn endgame) 23...♖e8 24.♖d1 – Black has a weak d-pawn and an exposed king and he is facing a difficult defence.



15. d4-d5!

This thematic pawn thrust works excellently here. It soon becomes clear that White will get his pawn back while his attack continues.

15. ... ♗b7xd5

Forced. Other captures lose:

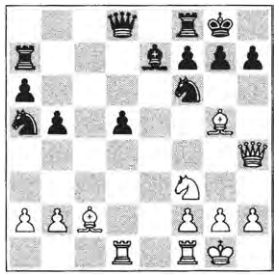
A) 15...♘xd5? 16.♘xd5 ♗xd5 17.♖xd5! (White has a winning attack, but still he has to be careful with the execution, for example: 17.♗xh7+? ♔xh7 18.♕h4+ ♔g8 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♘g5 would be bad, failing to 20...♗e4! and Black wins) 17...exd5 (or 17...♕xd5 18.♗xe7 ♖c8 (if 18...♖xe7, 19.♕h4 and White is a piece up) 19.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20.♘g5+ wins) 18.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 19.♕h4+ ♔g8 (or 19...♔g6 20.♘e5+ ♔f5 21.♕g4+! ♔xe5 22.♗f4+ ♔f6 23.♖e1 with mate next move) 20.♗xe7 ♕xe7 21.♘g5 and Black must give his queen in order to prevent mate;

B) 15...exd5? does not help either: 16.♕h4 h6 (16...g6 loses to 17.♘e4!, while 17.♖fe1 should also win) and now the standard piece sacrifice decides again: 17.♗xh6! gxh6 18.♕xh6 and White soon delivers mate.

16. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5

16...♘xd5 17.♖xd5! transposes to the variation mentioned in the previous comment (15...♘d5).

17. ♕f4-h4



17. ... h7-h5!

In a difficult position, Anand is putting up the best defence. Other moves would make White's task considerably easier; after 17...h6, for example, the standard sacrifice works again: 18.♗xh6! gxh6 19.♕xh6 ♖c7 (or 19...♖e8 20.♖d4 ♗f8 21.♖g4+, mating) 20.♘d4! (as usual, the involvement of extra forces in the attack decides the battle) 20...♖xc2 21.♖d3! ♘g4 22.♖g3 ♕d7 23.♕h5 wins.

After 17...g6 18.♖fe1, Black loses material.

18. ♖f1-e1!

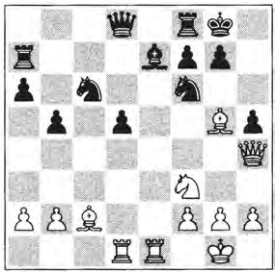
White is calmly increasing the pressure.

18. ... ♘a5-c6

It may seem that Black, by bringing his knight back into play, is going to escape, but Kramnik finds a way to break the fortress. Anyhow, it is difficult to give Black good advice as other moves would not suffice either, for instance:

A) 18...♕c8 19.♘d4 ♕g4 (trying to find refuge in the endgame) 20.♕xg4 hxg4 21.♗d2! ♗d8 (21...b4? loses to the simple 22.♖xe7 ♖xe7 23.♗xb4) 22.♗b4 ♖e8 23.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 24.♗f5 – White's bishops are dominating the board and Black will soon start losing material;

B) Or 18...♖c7 19.♘d4 ♘c4 20.♘f5 ♘xb2 21.♖c1 ♖e8 22.♕g3 and White should win in the attack.



19. g2-g4! ♕d8-d6

If 19...♖c7, 20.gxh5 simply continues the attack.

19...♖e8? loses by force to 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♕xh5 ♖e6 (or 21...g6 22.♗xg6! ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 fxg6 24.♕xg6+ ♔f8 25.♖e6) 22.♖xe6 fxe6 23.♖e1 ♕d7 24.♗f5! ♘d8 25.g5 ♗xb2 26.♘h4 and either Black gets mated or he loses tons of material.

In the event of 19...♖d7, White will be a healthy pawn up after 20.gxh5 ♘e4

21.♗xe4 dxe4 22.♖xd7 ♕xd7 23.♕xe4.

19...♘xg4? is bad, losing to 20.♕xh5 f5 21.♖xd5 ♕xd5 22.♗b3.

20. g4xh5 ♕d6-b4

Black is trying to exchange queens, hoping to find it easier to neutralize the attack.

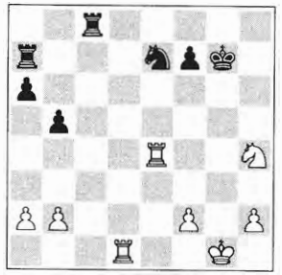
20...♘h7 does not solve his problems, since the attack continues after 21.♗f4! ♕c5 (21...♕b4 loses to 22.♕g3 ♕xb2 23.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 24.♘e5 ♘d8 25.♘d7! with 26.♗e5 to follow) 22.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 23.♕g4.

21. h5-h6!

Kramnik correctly judges that his attack also continues strongly after the queen swap.

21. ... ♕b4xh4
22. ♘f3xh4 ♘f6-e4
23. h6xg7 ♖f8-c8
24. ♗g5xe7 ♘c6xe7
25. ♗c2xe4 d5xe4
26. ♖e1xe4 ♔g8xg7

It seems as if Black has managed to keep the damage limited and, in the ensuing endgame, has reasonable chances of survival. Black's main problem here, however, is that the white attack is far from over. It is nice to see how Kramnik, with relatively little material left, manages to keep a firm initiative until the end of the game.



27. ♖d1-d6!

White correctly judges that there is much more in the position than just the pawn-up rook endgame resulting from 27.♖xe7 ♖xe7 28.♘f5+ ♔f6 29.♘xe7 ♔xe7.

27. ... ♖c8-c5

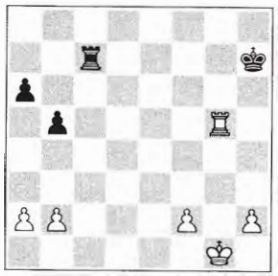
The attempt at counterplay 27...♖c2 loses to 28.♖g4+ ♔h7 29.♖f6 ♘g6 (or 29...♘g8 30.♖f3 ♘h6 31.♖g5 ♖xb2? 32.♖h5) 30.♘f5 ♖ac7 31.h4!.

28. ♖e4-g4+ ♔g7-h7
29. ♘h4-f3! ♘e7-g6
30. ♘f3-g5+ ♔h7-g7
31. ♘g5xf7

A rook ending with two extra pawns is something Kramnik is prepared to consider.

31. ... ♖a7xf7
32. ♖d6xg6+ ♔g7-h7
33. ♖g6-g5 ♖c5xg5
34. ♖g4xg5 ♖f7-c7

The only thing White has to take care of is to keep at least one queenside pawn on the board in order to avoid a theoretical rook + h- and f-pawn versus rook ending.



35. a2-a3 b5-b4
36. a3xb4 ♖c7-c1+
37. ♔g1-g2 ♖c1-b1
38. ♖g5-a5 ♖b1xb2
39. ♖a5-a4! 1-0

Even though the next game in itself does not really belong in a chapter on isolated pawn-positions, it is an excellent example of the dynamic power of central pawn breaks and also a good interlude between this and the next chapter, on hanging pawns.

QO 8.12 (D58) **GAME 35**
Miguel Illescas Cordoba
Nigel Short
Pamplona 1999/00 (5)

1. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5
2. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
3. c2-c4 e7-e6
4. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7
5. ♗c1-g5 h7-h6
6. ♗g5-h4 0-0
7. e2-e3 b7-b6

The Tartakower/Makogonov Variation is one of the oldest and strategically soundest variations in the classical openings.

8. ♗f1-e2 ♗c8-b7
9. ♗h4xf6 ♗e7xf6
10. c4xd5 e6xd5

One may wonder why White first 'loses' a tempo with 6.♗h4 and then takes with 9.♗xf6. Well, White wanted to wait for Black to place his bishop on b7, then take on f6 and capture with the pawn on d5, forcing the ...exd5 recapture and obtaining a pawn structure where his light-squared bishop should be better placed than its black counterpart.

This position resembles those with the d4/d5 pawn symmetry in the centre where (as we have already established) White's light-squared bishop is almost per definition better placed than its black colleague.

Here, however, there is a rather important difference, since White has a mobile pawn on e3 and Black has one on c7. Most of the time it is advantageous for White if Black decides to push ...c7-c5 and then captures ...cxd4, allowing White to recapture e3xd4 and obtain the advantageous central symmetry with a better bishop.

The problem for White, however, is that after playing ...c7-c5, Black usually keeps the tension in the centre, relying on his bishop pair (the bishop being well placed on f6). Should White try to take advantage of Black's hanging pawns and at some stage take d4xc5, then Black gets the opportunity (as we will see later in a number of examples in Chapter 3 on hanging pawns) to play the dynamic ...d5-d4 pawn thrust, often developing a serious initiative.

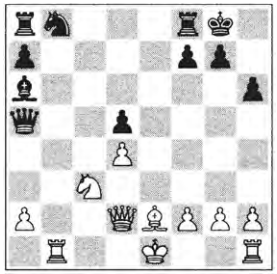
This is one of the main positions in the Tartakower/Makogonov, which is also important for a strategic understanding of pawn structures in the middlegame in general. So I shall give a number of lines that are not of direct interest for this game, but serve to create a better understanding of the pros and cons of the position.

11. 0-0

Another rather logical and frequently played move here is 11.b4 (White

seizes space on the queenside, trying to discourage Black from making the liberating move ...c7-c5) and now:

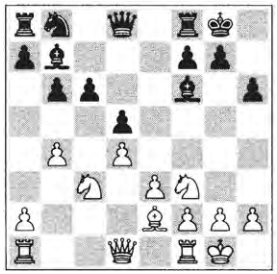
A) The immediate 11...c5 is possible, but plays rather into White's hands. Black normally lands in a slightly inferior, passive position after 12.bxc5 bxc5 13.♖b1 ♕a5 14.♕d2 cxd4 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4 16.exd4 and again, the central d4/d5 pawn symmetry with White having the upper hand due to his superior light-squared bishop, has been reached; 16...♗a6



analysis diagram

17.♘b5! ♕d8 18.0-0 ♘d7 19.♖fc1 ♘f6 20.f3 and White was better in Vaganian-Geller, New York 1990;

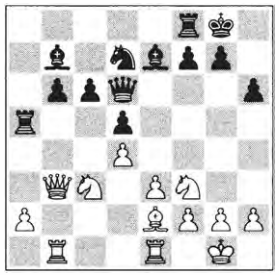
B) 11...c6 (for the time being, Black agrees to play a relatively passive position, planning to develop counterplay associated with ...a7-a5) 12.0-0



analysis diagram

B1) Black can first develop his pieces with 12...♖e8 13.♕b3 ♘d7, but then he will remain passive after 14.♖ad1! (putting pressure on the d5-square, which means that Black's ...a7-a5 thrust will never work because it would be met by b4-b5, hitting on the potential weakness of his d5 pawn) 14...a6 15.a4 ♘f8 16.a5! bxa5 17.bxa5 (Black's b7 bishop is merely a pawn here) 17...♖b8 18.♘a4! ♘e6 (taking a pawn with 18...♕xa5? leads to total white domination after 19.♘c5) 19.♕c3 and White had a clear advantage in Kasparov-Ehlvest, Belgrade 1989;

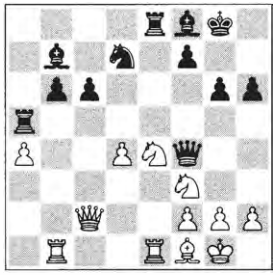
B2) 12...♕d6 13.♕b3 ♘d7 14.♖fe1 ♗e7 and after 15.♖ab1 Black can search for counterplay with 15...a5 16.bxa5 ♖xa5.



analysis diagram

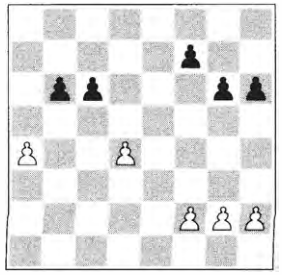
White now fixes Black's weakness on b6 and prepares the e3-e4 break. The black bishop on b7 remains passive, while after White executes e3-e4, Black's pawns on b6 and c6 will be much weaker than the white ones on a4 and d4. The following game gives an excellent illustration of White's pluses: 17.a4 ♖e8 18.♗f1 ♗f8 19.♕c2! (preparing e3-e4. The immediate 19.e4? would have been a mistake due to 19...dxe4 20.♘xe4 ♕a3!) 19...g6 (now the time has come for White to

execute the thematic central break, under favourable circumstances. 19...♗a6!, exchanging the light-squared bishops and eliminating plenty of tactical possibilities for White, was advisable) 20.e4! dxe4 21.♘xe4 ♕f4.



analysis diagram

This is one of the thematic positions in this type of Tartakower/Makogonov Variation. Black has weak pawns on b6 and c6, while White easily defends his potential weaknesses on a4 and d4. Black's weakness on f7 and White's imminent control of the e-file provides him with plenty of tactical possibilities. It is important for the reader to know this thematic position, because it can arise frequently in this variation and it almost invariably favours White. Karpov himself has won many games as White, proving over and over again that the pawn structure White: a4, d4, Black: b6, c6...



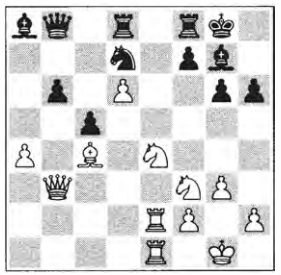
Structure a4/d4 vs b6/c6

... favours White (find his games in this line in a database and study them on your own!).

22.♗c4! (by now Black definitely regretted not exchanging his bishop with 19...♗a6) 22...♗g7 23.♖e2 (control of the e-file is essential here) 23...c5 (Black's position is already difficult and this attempt at counterplay does not help) 24.d5 ♖aa8 25.♖be1 ♖ad8 26.♕b3! (an excellent, multifunctional move. White targets b6 and f7 and prepares to chase away the black queen with g2-g3) 26...♗a8 27.g3 ♕b8 28.d6 and now:

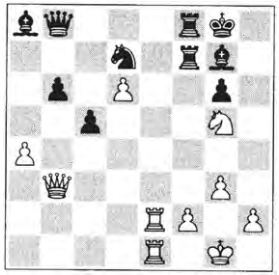
B21) Black cannot solve his problems tactically with 28...♖xe4 29.♗xf7+ ♔h7 30.♖xe4 ♗xe4 31.♖xe4 ♘f8 (if 31...♘f6, then 32.♘e5! wins immediately) because of 32.♘e5! ♗xe5 33.♖xe5 ♕xd6 34.♖d5 ♕e7 35.♗xg6+! ♘xg6 36.♖xd8 ♕xd8 37.♕f7+ ♔h8 38.♕xg6 ♕d1+ 39.♔g2 ♕xa4 40.♕xh6+ ♔g8 41.♕g6+ ♔h8 42.h4! ♕a8+ 43.f3 ♕a2+ 44.♔h3 ♕d5 45.♕f6+ ♔g8 46.g4 c4 47.h5 and White wins;

B22) 28...♖f8



analysis diagram

Now the situation is ripe for a tactical solution, and Karpov's execution is brilliant: 29.♗xf7+! ♖xf7 30.♘eg5 hxg5 31.♘xg5 ♖f8



analysis diagram

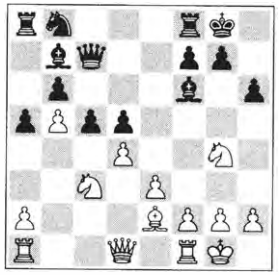
32.♖e8! (precision is important; 32.♘xf7? is wrong due to 32...♕b7! 33.♘d8+ ♕d5 34.♕xd5+ ♗xd5 35.♘e6 ♖f7 and Black is slightly better) 32...♕xd6 33.♕xf7+ ♔h8 34.♘e6! 1-0, Karpov-Kir. Georgiev, Tilburg 1994.

B3) 12...a5!, looking for immediate counterplay. Now White has three possibilities:

B31) White's standard plan, 13.bxa5 ♖xa5 14.♕b3, trying to hit on Black's potential b6 and c6 weakness, does not work that well here after 14...♗c8! (improving the bishop) 15.♗d3 (if 15.♖ab1?, then 15...♗f5 16.♖b2 ♘d7) 15...♗e6 16.a4 c5! (the time is right for concrete counterplay) 17.♗b5 ♘a6 18.♖ad1 (trying to force ...c5-c4) 18...c4 19.♕b1 ♘c7 20.♘e5 ♘xb5 21.axb5 ♗xe5! 22.dxe5 ♕a8 and thanks to his passed c-pawn and imminent control of the a-file (...♖a3, ...♕a5), Black had good counterplay in Sokolov-Lutz, Garmisch Partenkirchen 1994;

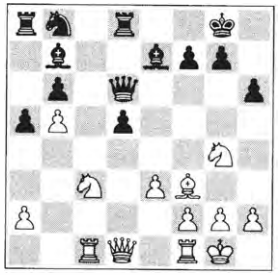
B32) Should White decide to maintain his pawn pressure with 13.a3, then Black gets good play with 13...♖e8 14.♕b3 b5! with ...♘d7-b6-c4 to follow. This is one of the standard plans in these positions, worth remembering;

B33) 13.b5 c5 14.♘e5 (this knight jump is the essence of the plan started with 13.b5. White wants to disturb the harmonious development of Black's pieces) 14...♕c7 (14...♘d7? is a blunder due to 15.♘c6, while 14...♗xe5 15.dxe5 d4 16.exd4 cxd4 is a logical plan. Black has opened up his b7 bishop, while White has a grip on the weak b6 pawn, for instance: 17.♘a4 ♕g5! 18.♗g4 ♕xe5 19.♘xb6 ♖a7 and Black has dynamic play, holding the balance) 15.♘g4 (the point behind White's plan)



analysis diagram

B331) 15...♗e7?! is no good due to 16.♗f3 ♖d8 17.dxc5! ♕xc5 18.♖c1 ♕d6



analysis diagram

19.♕d4! (a positional move, relying on tactical motifs) 19...♕e6 (19...h5 20.♘e5 ♗f6 fails to 21.♘c4! dxc4 (21...♕e7? 22.♕xb6) 22.♕xd6 ♖xd6 23.♗xb7 ♖a7 24.♘e4! ♖d8 25.♗c6 ♘xc6 26.bxc6 b5 27.a4 and Black has a

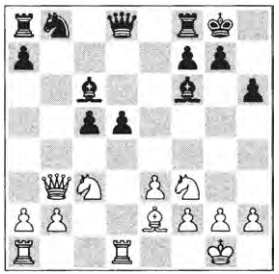
terrible endgame) 20.♘e2! ♗c5 21.♘f4 ♕e7 22.♕e5 and Black's weak d5 pawn will fall soon;

B332) 15...♘d7! 16.♗f3 ♖ad8! (dynamic defence. 16...cxd4 is not good due to 17.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 18.♕xd4 with a typical isolated pawn advantage) 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 cxd4 19.♖c1 (or 19.exd4 ♕f4 20.♖c1 ♕xd4 21.♕xd4 ♗xd4 22.♖fd1 ♗c5 23.♗c6 ♘f6 with a drawn endgame) 19...♕d6 20.e4 ♘c5 and Black has strong counterplay, for example: 21.♖c4 d3 22.f4 ♖fe8.

11. ... ♕d8-e7

This move prevents the standard b2-b4 advance and is a logical option here. The drawback of the move is that, should White successfully execute ♖e1 and e3-e4, the black queen can prove to be unfortunately placed on the e-file.

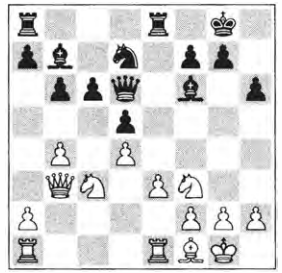
The immediate 11...c5 has also been tried and is fully playable. Play may then continue 12.dxc5 bxc5! (this direct recapture offers active counterplay and is better than the relatively passive 12...♗xc3 13.bxc3 bxc5 14.♖b1 ♕c7 15.♘e5! ♘d7 16.♘xd7 ♕xd7 17.♕b3 ♗c6 18.♕a3 ♕e7 19.♗f3 and due to the weakness of the c5 and d5 pawns Black had to defend an inferior position in Kramnik-Khalifman, Linares 2000) 13.♕b3 ♗c6 14.♖fd1



analysis diagram

14...♘d7! (to obtain active counterplay it is essential for Black to keep his f6 bishop. A classic mistake would have been 14...♗xc3? 15.♕xc3 ♘d7 due to 16.b4! c4 17.b5 ♗b7 18.a4 and White has a typical positional advantage) 15.♗b5!? (an inventive attempt. 15.♘xd5 brings nothing due to 15...♖b8) 15...♖b8 16.♗xc6 (the point of White's previous move) 16...♖xb3 17.axb3 ♗xc3 18.bxc3 ♘f6 19.c4 d4 20.exd4 cxd4 21.♖xd4 ♕b6 22.♗b5 ♕c5 with approximate equality in Piket-Yegiazarian, Ohrid Ech 2001.

11...♖e8 is in itself a logical developing move, but it also has its drawbacks, as is aptly shown in the following game: 12.b4 (as we have seen, this is a standard plan for White. Black will be late with his counterplay now) 12...c6 13.♕b3 ♕d6 14.♖fe1! ♘d7 15.♗f1 (a timely executed e3-e4 is the key to White's advantage)



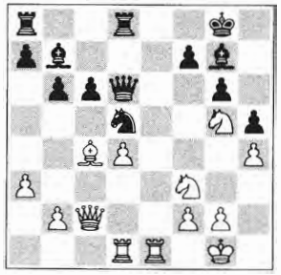
analysis diagram

15...♗e7 16.♖ab1 a5 17.bxa5 ♖xa5 18.a4 ♗a6 19.♗xa6 ♖xa6 20.e4! dxe4 21.♘xe4 ♕g6 22.♖e3 – this is a type of position that is important to remember. Here, Black's b6 and c6 pawns are per definition weaker than White's a4 and d4 pawns, so Black is sentenced to a long, unpleasant defence, as was seen in Karpov-Bönsch, Baden-Baden 1992.

12. ♕d1-b3 ♖f8-d8
13. ♖f1-d1

Another plan here is 13.♖ad1, waiting for Black to play ...c7-c6, and then putting another rook on e1 and trying to execute e3-e4. Now:

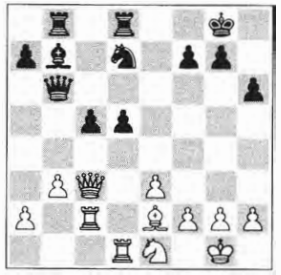
A) In the case of 13...c6 (White, as said, focuses on the e3-e4 break) 14.♖fe1 ♘a6? (14...♘d7 is a better move) 15.e4! dxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘c7 17.♗c4 ♘d5 18.♕c2 White's initiative is very unpleasant: 18...g6 19.h4 h5 20.a3 ♗g7 21.♘eg5 ♕d6



analysis diagram

22.♘xf7! (a standard tactical motif) 22...♔xf7 23.♘g5+ and with 24.♖e6 to follow, Black resigned in Podgaets-Gusev, Odessa 1991.

B) 13...c5 is probably the best move. Black should not be afraid of the creation of hanging pawns in the centre and should look for active play: 14.dxc5 ♗xc3 15.♕xc3 bxc5 – a standard structure with parallel hanging pawns in the centre has been created. There is a dynamic balance; however, things can go wrong quickly, which the following game illustrates very well: 16.♖c1 ♘d7 17.♖c2 ♖ab8 18.b3 (a strategically tense position has been created. White is trying to target Black's hanging pawns in the centre, while Black has to organize active counterplay related to the dynamics of the ...d5-d4 pawn thrust) 18...♕e6 19.♖d1 ♕b6 20.♘e1! (planning ♗g4 in order to attack the black knight on d7 that defends the c5 pawn)



analysis diagram

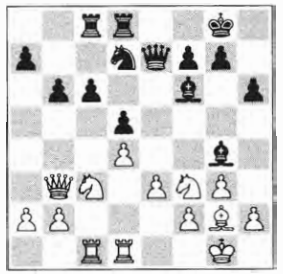
20...♖bc8 (20...♕g6, preventing ♗g4, would have given Black good play) 21.♗g4 ♕g6? (now this move is wrong. Better was 21...♖c7) 22.♗h3 ♖c7 23.♘d3! ♘f6 24.♕a5! (this possibility was obviously overlooked by Black when he played 21...♕g6?) 24...♘e8 25.♖xc5 ♖xc5 26.♕xc5 and in this hopeless position Black resigned in the 5th Candidates' match game Kortchnoi-Geller, Moscow 1971.

13. ... c7-c6
14. ♗e2-f1

Targeting the black queenside with 14.a4 ♘a6 15.a5 does not bring anything after the correct 15...b5!. The game P.Nikolic-Beliavsky, Reykjavik World Cup 1991, instead continued 15...♕b4 16.♕c2 (better was 16.♕xb4! ♘xb4 17.♘a4, with advantage) 16...♕e7 17.♘a4? (forcing Black to make a good decision) 17...b5 18.♘c3 ♗c8! (improving the bishop. 18...♘c7?! is wrong due to 19.e4! b4 20.e5 and White is better) 19.♘a2 ♗d7 20.♖ab1 ♖dc8 (20...♖ac8 was also possible. In general it is very important for Black here to force b2-b4, since Black's strategic idea is to transfer his knight to c4, and White would not be able to prevent this with b2-b3) 21.b4 ♘c7 (it is time for the knight to head for c4) 22.♘c3 g6 (Black has to be careful with the execution, since 22...♘e8? would run into 23.e4) 23.♖e1 ♗g7 24.♗d3 (preparing e3-e4) 24...♗g4! 25.♘d2 ♘e8 26.h3 (if 26.e4?!, then 26...♕g5) 26...♗e6 27.♘e2 ♘d6 28.♘b3 ♘c4 – Black has achieved his strategic objectives and has an excellent game.

14. ... ♘b8-a6

Black correctly first develops his knight, keeping his bishop on b7 for the time being. He may also decide to improve his light-squared bishop with 14...♗c8 15.g3 ♗g4. The drawback of this plan is that his c6 pawn will be easier to target. The following game is a good illustration: 16.♗g2 ♘d7 17.♖ac1 ♖ac8



analysis diagram

18.♘e2! (starting to put pressure on c6) 18...♘f8 19.h3 ♗f5 20.♘f4 g6 21.♕a4! ♗g7 22.b4 (ready for 23.♖xc6 ♗d7 24.b5) 22...b5 23.♕a6 ♕xb4 24.♖xc6 (now the d5 pawn is very weak) 24...♖xc6 25.♕xc6 ♕a4 26.♖a1 ♕c4 27.♕a6 ♖d7 28.♘d2 ♕b4 29.♘b3 ♗e4 30.♖c1 (Black is lost here) 30...g5 31.♘h5 ♘e6 32.♗xe4 dxe4 33.♔g2 ♕a4 34.♖c8+ ♘f8 35.♖xf8+! ♗xf8 36.♘f6+ ♔g7 37.♕xa4 bxa4 38.♘xd7 axb3 39.axb3 ♗d6 40.g4 ♔g6 41.f3 exf3+ 42.♔xf3 f5 43.e4 fxe4+ 44.♔xe4 ♔f7 45.♔d5 ♗g3 46.♔c6 ♔e7 47.d5 1-0, Piket-Beliavsky, Bugojno 1999.

15. ♖d1-d2 ♘a6-c7
16. a2-a4 ♘c7-e6
17. a4-a5 b6-b5!
18. ♕b3-a2

18.a6 ♗c8 is risky for White, given the fact that he will have to defend the a6 pawn later on, but probably it had to be played. Black now quickly develops a strong initiative.

18. ... a7-a6!
19. ♖a1-c1?

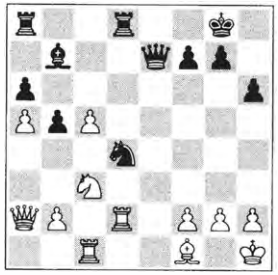
White does not sense the danger. 19.♖ad1, strengthening the control of the d4-square, had to be played.

19. ... c6-c5!
20. d4xc5 d5-d4!

Now the bishop on b7 becomes a monster.

21. ♘f3xd4 ♗f6xd4
22. e3xd4 ♘e6xd4
23. ♔g1-h1

Now Black finishes off the attack very energetically, not giving White any time to breathe.



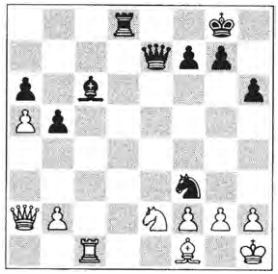
23. ... ♘d4-f3!

Excellent execution by the English grandmaster.

24. ♖d2xd8+

24.♖dd1 loses to 24...♕g5! (threatening ...♘d2 or ...♕f4) 25.♘e2 ♕h4! 26.h3 ♖xd1 27.♖xd1 ♕xf2 28.♕a3 ♘e1!.

24. ... ♖a8xd8
25. c5-c6 ♗b7xc6
26. ♘c3-e2



26. ... ♕e7-h4!!
27. g2xf3 ♕h4xf2
28. ♘e2-f4 ♗c6xf3+

Also winning was 28...♕e3 29.♖xc6 ♕xf3+ 30.♔g1 ♖d1 31.♖c8+ ♔h7.

29. ♗f1-g2 ♖d8-d2
30. ♖c1-g1

White also loses after 30.♖c8+ ♔h7 31.♕b1+ g6 32.♕g1 ♖d1.

30. ... ♗f3-e4!

A nice final touch. White resigned.

Chapter 3

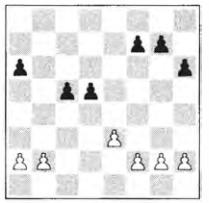
Parallel Hanging Pawns in the Centre

Introduction

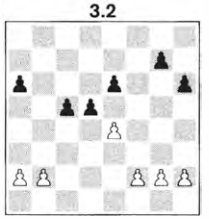
In this chapter I have kept the concept similar to the chapters on doubled pawns and isolated pawns, selecting diagrams that show pawn structures (and games) related to the most principled plans for both sides: with parallel hanging pawns and fighting against them.

Hanging pawns in the centre are by definition connected; for two hanging pawns on the same rank we will use the term 'parallel' in this book. They normally arise from various 1.d4 openings, like the Tarrasch Defence, the Tartakower Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Queen's Indian Defence, the Meran Variation, etc. In four of our five commented games, the Tartakower Variation of the Queen's Gambit is played. For a club player willing to learn the strategic pros and cons of these positions and, subsequently, to either employ this variation with black or to learn better how to tackle it with white in practical tournament games, it will certainly pay off to spend time on a thorough analysis of these games and comments.

3.1



3.2

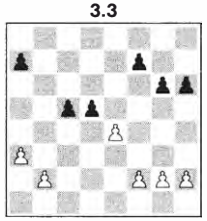


Structure 3.1 & **Structure 3.2** (Game 36 – Fischer-Spassky). This World Championship classic remains an excellent learning example. After the opening, one of the most typical positions with hanging pawns in the centre arises. Fischer then executes a standard plan, executed by White on a number of other occasions in different openings – one of the main lines of the Tarrasch Defence in particular: first he takes the black bishop on e6 with ♘d4xe6, forcing ...f7xe6, and then attacking the black centre with a timely e3-e4 pawn thrust, forcing Black to make a positional concession. Spassky quickly collapses under the pressure. The comments to this game also provide a good opening guideline for a club player in this Tartakower Variation of the Queen's Gambit.

In Game 37 (Sokolov-Khalifman) we see White building up pressure against Black's hanging pawns in the centre, to the point where Black is forced to look for tactical solutions.

Structure 3.3 (Game 38 – Sokolov-Short). In this game White executes the standard e3-e4 plan, hitting Black's hanging pawns in the centre, with the difference compared to the Fischer-Spassky game that there has been no piece exchange on e6, so the black pawn is still on f7. An interesting strategic battle ensues, showing how easily things can go wrong in such complicated positions. This game and its comments are a good learning example of this Tartakower line, as well as of the strategic pros and cons of the position.

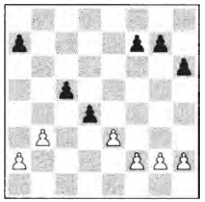
3.3



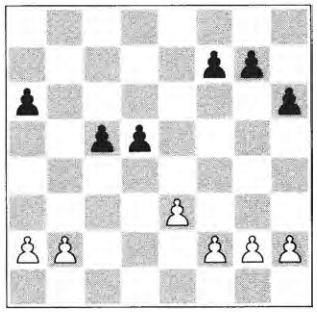
Game 39 – Kramnik-Yusupov is an interesting tussle, where both sides demonstrate an abundance of tactical possibilities such as are often present in these dynamic positions. Again, besides improving his understanding of these positions in general, the club player will find some useful opening information about this Tartakower line.

Structure 3.4 (Game 40 – Lautier-Short). Excellent play by Short with the parallel hanging pawns shows the dynamic possibilities related to a well-executed pawn break – in this case, ...d5-d4. A standard plan for developing an initiative for the side with the hanging pawns. Again, apart from strategic objectives, useful opening explanations have been provided.

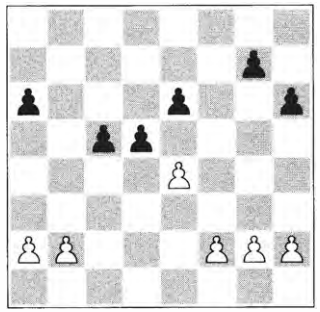
3.4



Structure 3.1



Structure 3.2



We will start this chapter on parallel hanging pawns in the centre with one of the classic examples. Perhaps I have gone too far giving and explaining the many different lines and ideas in this famous game, but I have done this with a reason. This particular opening position, the plans related to it and the middlegame arising from it, are classic and occur in many of the positions with hanging pawns in the centre. Therefore, I would advise the reader not to be lazy, but to delve deeply into the comments and try to understand them.

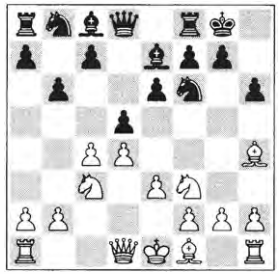
QO 6.6 (D59) **GAME 36**

Robert James Fischer

Boris Spassky

Reykjavik World Championship 1972 (6)

1.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**	**3.**	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**	**4.**	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
			5.	**♗c1-g5**	**0-0**
			6.	**e2-e3**	**h7-h6**
			7.	**♗g5-h4**	**b7-b6**



8. c4xd5

One of the main 'old' lines of the Tartakower/Makogonov Variation. Modern theory focuses more on 8.♗d3 or 8.♗xf6. Both these moves have been investigated in the Isolated Pawn chapter – see Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky (Game 28) and Illescas Cordoba-Short (Game 35).

8. ... ♘f6xd5

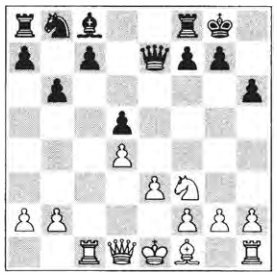
It is considered to be a good idea for Black to exchange a few pieces here in order to have more space to manoeuvre. White has better chances in the positions arising after 8...exd5 9.♗d3 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♕c2 c5 12.♖ad1, with ♘f3-e5 and ♗d3-f5 to follow.

9. ♗h4xe7 ♕d8xe7

10. ♘c3xd5 e6xd5

11. ♖a1-c1

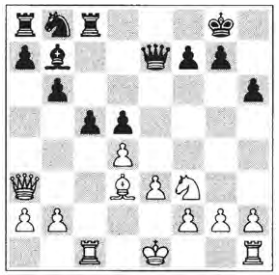
The strategic situation is rather clear. White has agreed to exchange a few pieces in order to create a potential weakness: Black's c-pawn. Black, on the other hand, will play ...c7-c5 and then, after a pawn swap on c5 (dxc5 bxc5), a position would arise with two parallel hanging pawns in the centre. Black is harmoniously developed and should have a good game in general. White, on his part, will use the queen manoeuvre ♕a4-a3 in order to pin the black queen along the a3-f8 diagonal – on e7 –, trying to create some problems for Black.



11. ... ♗c8-e6

As often after a pawn swap on d5, Black keeps his bishop on the h3-c8 diagonal, since from b7 it would hit its own pawn on d5. This general logic is questionable here, since after ...c7-c5 White is likely to take on c5 and then, if Black has two parallel hanging pawns in the centre (c5 and d5), it is quite useful to have the bishop placed on the long diagonal, supporting various tactics related to the ...d5-d4 break. Anyhow, Black has dynamic play after 11...♗b7 and White has not shown a way to an advantage after this continuation. It is fully playable and I will give a few examples:

A) With 12.♕a4 White follows a standard plan, like in our main game; relying on the pin along the a3-f8 diagonal. 12...c5 13.♕a3 ♖c8. Now, 14.♗d3, with the idea to pin a black knight on d7 with ♗f5, is well answered with:



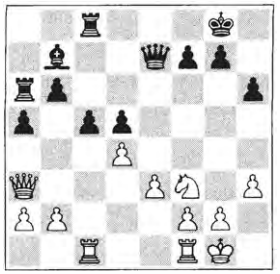
analysis diagram

14...♘c6!, and if 15.dxc5 (15.0-0 c4! 16.♕xe7 ♘xe7 17.♗b1 b5 is better for Black), then 15...d4! – the reader is advised to remember these classic motifs. After 14.♗e2:

A1) A very interesting plan is 14...a5!? 15.0-0 ♘a6 16.♗xa6 ♖xa6 and Black has enough dynamic possibilities to compensate for his weak c5 pawn, for example:

A11) 17.♖fd1 ♕e4! and Black has an excellent game, since if White should decide to take a pawn with 18.dxc5?, then Black's b7 bishop becomes a monster: 18...bxc5 19.♖xc5 ♖xc5 20.♕xc5 ♖g6! 21.♘e1 d4;

A12) 17.h3

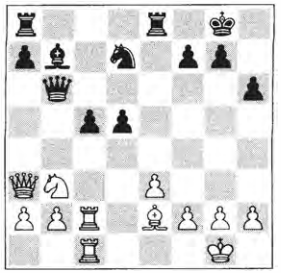


analysis diagram

17...♕e4! 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.♖xc5 ♖xc5 20.♕xc5 ♖g6 21.♔h1 d4 22.♕xd4 ♕xf3 23.gxf3 ♗xf3+ 24.♔h2 ♖g2+ with a draw by perpetual check in Yermolinsky-Lputian, Telavi 1982.

A2) 14...♘d7 15.0-0 ♘f8 (the typical knight transfer to e6, already seen in a few earlier examples, works here as well) 16.♖fd1 ♖c7 (threatening c5-c4) 17.dxc5 bxc5 18.♗a6 ♗xa6 19.♕xa6 ♖d8 20.♕d3 ♘e6 21.♕f5 d4 and Black has achieved his strategic objectives, and he had a good game in Flohr-Vidmar, Groningen 1946.

A21) Another move, played by Spassky six years earlier, is 15...♕f8 (a standard way to solve the queen pin) 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.♖c2 ♕d6! (transferring the queen to b6, where it will be well placed to support the ...d5-d4 break) 18.♖fc1 ♕b6 19.♘d2! (transferring the knight to b3 to increase the pressure on the c5 pawn) 19...♖e8 (Black understands that the c5 pawn cannot be adequately defended, so he prepares a tactical solution) 20.♘b3. Black now has to go for a pawn break he has planned for the past few moves, which involves a pawn sacrifice:



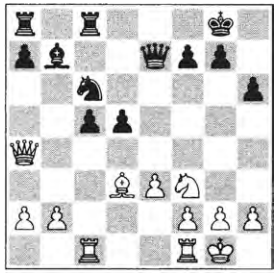
analysis diagram

20...d4! 21.♘xc5 ♘xc5 22.♖xc5 dxe3 23.fxe3 ♖e7. Black seems to have enough compensation to hold the balance. Therefore, the idea with 15...♘f8 seems more sound to me. For example: 24.♖b5 (White decides to simplify into a drawn endgame. Should he decide to hang on to his pawn with 24.b4, then, due to his strong bishop on b7 and White's weak e3 pawn, Black gets good compensation after 24...♖d8) 24...♕xe3+ 25.♕xe3 ♖xe3 26.♖xb7 ♖xe2 27.♖cc7 ♖d8 28.♖d7 (a terrible mistake would have been 28.♖xf7?? due

to 28...♖d1+ 29.♖f1 ♖dd2) 28...♖c8 29.♖bc7 draw, Petrosian-Spassky, Santa Monica 1966.

Other moves do not pose any problems for Black, for example:

B) 12.♗e2 c5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.0-0 ♖c8! (a mistake is 14...♘d7?, because White has the thematic 15.b4! c4 16.♘d4 with a clear advantage) 15.♕a4 ♘c6 16.♗d3



analysis diagram

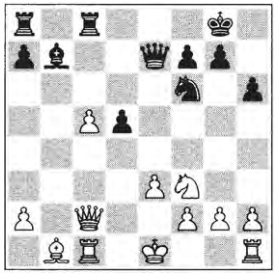
16...♘d8! (a nice plan, worth remembering. On e6 the knight will be well placed) 17.♖fe1 ♘e6 18.e4 (trying to provoke d5-d4, but this comes one tempo too late) 18...c4! 19.♗b1 ♘c5 20.♕a3 dxe4 Szabo-Pirc, Saltsjöbaden Interzonal 1948;

C) 12.♗d3 c5 and now:

C1) In case of 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♖e1 ♘d7 16.♕a4 ♘f8!, Black again transfers his knight to e6, with approximate equality;

C2) In case of 13.0-0 Black gets a good game by taking space on the queenside with 13...c4;

C3) The 'ambitious' 13.♗b1?! ♘d7 14.♕c2 ♘f6 15.dxc5?! ♖fc8 16.b4? (snatching a pawn and defending it with the king still in the middle of the board is not a good idea) 16...bxc5 17.bxc5

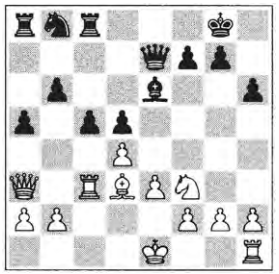


analysis diagram

17...♗a6! (now the white king is forever confined to the middle of the board, and this for the price of one lousy pawn) 18.♘d4 ♘e4 19.c6 ♕b4+ 20.♔d1 ♗d3! (a simple motif, surely missed by White) 21.♕xd3 ♘xf2+ and Black soon won in Timman-Rukavina, Sombor Parcetic Memorial 1972.

12. ♕d1-a4 c7-c5

A rather viable alternative is 12...a5!?. The idea is to vacate the a7-square for the black queen, so that Black can efficiently solve the problem of his pawn being pinned on c5, and at the same time defend this pawn. I like this plan very much. One of the stem games continued 13.♖c3 (or 13.♗b5 ♖c8 14.0-0 ♕b4 15.a3 (if 15.♘e5, 15...c5) 15...♕xa4 16.♗xa4 c5 17.♖c3 c4 18.b3 ♗d7! with a good game for Black) 13...♖c8 14.♗d3 c5 15.♕a3



analysis diagram

15...♕a7! (the point behind 12...a5) 16.♗b5 ♘a6 17.0-0. Now Black displays an excellent feeling for the position and plays a beautiful series of moves: 17...♘c7! 18.♗c6 c4! 19.b4 ♕a6! 20.bxa5 ♘b5 21.♗xb5 ♕xb5 22.♘e5 ♖xa5 23.♕d6 ♖xa2 and Black was winning in Furman-Zaitsev, Tallinn 1991.

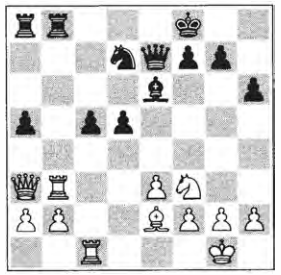
13. ♕a4-a3 ♖f8-c8

14. ♗f1-b5

The idea is to hit the black knight once it is developed to d7, and so to undermine the defence of the black c5 pawn.

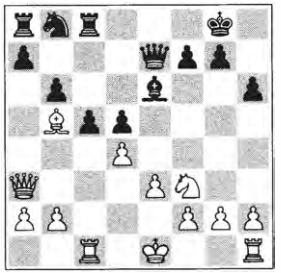
Another frequently played move here is 14.♗e2. Now Black gets a comfortable game with 14...a5. He chooses the same plan as in Furman-Zaitsev (see above after 12...a5!?): 15.0-0 ♕a7!. The queen is no longer pinned, so ...c5-c4 is a positional threat White has to reckon with. 16.b3 ♘d7 17.♗b5 ♖c7 18.♖fd1 ♖ac8 and Black had nothing to complain about in Karpov-Kavalek, Linares 1981.

14...♔f8 is also a good option to solve the problem of the pin on the queen, which was played by Kasparov on one occasion: 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.0-0 a5! (this move is almost invariably useful for Black in these positions) 17.♖c3 ♘d7 18.♖fc1 ♖cb8 19.♖b3



analysis diagram

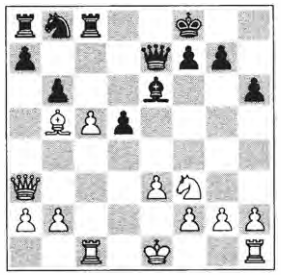
19...c4! (good judgement. Black surrenders control of the d4-square in order to enter with his rook on the second rank) 20.♖xb8+ ♖xb8 21.♕xa5 ♖xb2 and Black was slightly better in Winants-Kasparov, Brussels 1987.



14. ... a7-a6

Here Black has a number of possibilities to achieve a satisfactory game:

A) 14...♔f8 15.dxc5

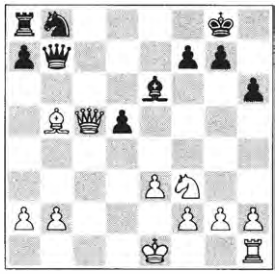


analysis diagram

15...♖xc5! (a correct decision. White has the advantage in the case of 15...bxc5 16.0-0 and now, if 16...♗g4?, then the simple 17.♖fd1 will do) 16.♖xc5 ♕xc5! (exchanging the queens is OK for Black here, since his king is close to the fray and will find a natural post on the d6-square) 17.♕xc5+ (17.♔d2 is equal after 17...♕xa3 18.bxa3 ♘d7 19.♗xd7

♗xd7) 17...bxc5 18.♔d2 ♔e7 19.♖c1 ♔d6 with equality;

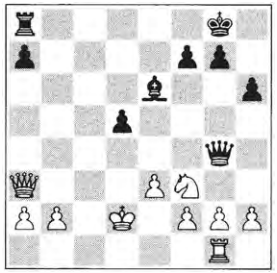
B) The most ambitious, and probably the best, for Black is 14...♕b7!, since after 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♖xc5 ♖xc5 17.♕xc5 ...



analysis diagram

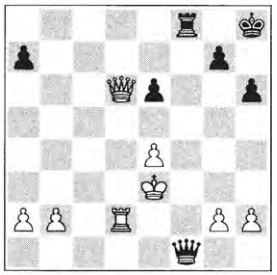
... Black has a strong response in 17...♘a6! (not good is 17...a6, because the position arising after 18.♗d3 ♕xb2 19.0-0 ♘d7 (19...♕xa2? is no good, since Black cannot finish his queenside development after 20.♘d4) 20.♕c6 ♖b8 21.♘d4 ♕b6 22.♖c1 is clearly better for White) 18.♗xa6 (in the case of 18.♕c6 ♕xc6 19.♗xc6, Black is better after 19...♖b8! (the immediate 19...♖c8 allows White to defend with 20.♗a4!) 20.0-0 (20.b3?? is now a terrible blunder, losing to 20...♖c8) 20...♖xb2 21.a4 ♘b4 22.♘d4 ♖a2) 18...♕xa6.

The white king stays in the middle and Black's compensation is very strong. The following game illustrates the trouble White has gotten himself into: 19.♕a3 ♕c4 20.♔d2 ♕g4 21.♖g1. Although the white king is in the middle, it seems that, with the relatively limited number of forces left on the board, he will be able to survive the assault. But...



analysis diagram

21...d4! (opening the position further) 22.♘xd4 (if 22.exd4, then 22...♗d5) 22...♕h4 23.♖e1 ♕xf2+ 24.♖e2 ♕f1 25.♘xe6 fxe6 26.♕d6 ♔h8 (even though there are only heavy pieces left, the black attack is still very strong) 27.e4 ♖c8 28.♔e3 ♖f8 29.♖d2? (a crucial mistake. 29.♔d2 had to be considered)



analysis diagram

29...e5! (after this, White finds himself in a mating net) 30.♕xe5 ♕e1+ 31.♖e2 ♕g1+ 32.♔d3 ♖d8+ 33.♔c3 ♕d1 34.♕b5 ♕d4+ 35.♔c2 a6!. This little move throws White off balance. 36.♕xa6 ♕c5+ 0-1, Timman-Geller, Hilversum 1973.

Note that this game was played shortly after the 1972 World Championship match, where Geller was one of Spassky's seconds, so most likely,

14...♕b7! had been found in Reykjavik. It would be interesting to know whether Fischer had analysed 14...♕b7 and if so, what he had planned to do about it.

C) The standard 14...a5!? plan might even work with one tempo less: 15.0-0 and now:

C1) 15...♘a6 does not equalize after 16.♘e5 ♘b4 17.♕a4 cxd4 (or 17...f6 18.♘g6 ♕f7 19.♘f4) 18.exd4 ♖xc1 (if 18..f6, then White is better after 19.♘g6 ♕d6 20.a3 ♗f5 21.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 22.axb4 ♗xg6 23.bxa5 bxa5 24.♕xa5 ♖c2 25.♕a3) 19.♖xc1 ♕g5 20.♖c7 ♕d2 21.a3± ♘a6 22.♗xa6 ♖xa6 23.♕e8+ ♔h7 24.♕b5 ♖a8 25.♕d3+ ♕xd3 26.♘xd3 with some advantage for White. As often seen in the Isolated Pawn chapter, White has the favourable upper hand-position with symmetry in the centre;

C2) 15...♘d7?! is not in the spirit of the position, since White gets a nice blockading post on d4 for his knight after 16.dxc5 ♘xc5 (16...bxc5? simply loses a pawn after 17.♘d4! a4 18.♘xe6 fxe6 19.♗xd7 ♕xd7 20.♖xc5) 17.♘d4;

C3) 15...♕a7! 16.♖c3 ♗d7! 17.♗e2 c4 with complicated play.

15. d4xc5 b6xc5

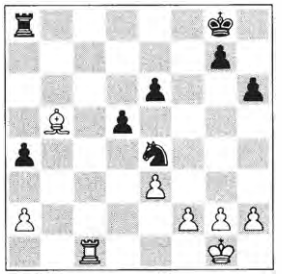
Black could also have taken with the rook, though with correct play White seems to have some edge: 15...♖xc5 and now:

A) 16.♖xc5 bxc5 (for the sake of achieving dynamic play it is in principle always advisable for Black to keep queens on the board. However, Black holds the endgame after 16...♕xc5 17.♕xc5 bxc5 18.♗a4 ♗d7!. 18...♘d7, on the other hand, is slightly better for White after 19.♗xd7! ♗xd7 20.♔d2) 17.0-0 ♗g4 18.♗e2 ♘d7 with an approximately equal game;

B) 16.0-0 ♕c7 (the point behind 15...♖xc5. White is forced to take on c5 and the black b6 pawn will end up on c5 anyway. 16...♗g4? is not good, since after 17.♘d4 ♕c7 White has 18.♘b3!) 17.♖xc5 ♕xc5 (wrong is 17...bxc5?!, since after 18.♖c1 ♕b6 19.♗a4 c4 20.♘d4 White, by forcing ...c5-c4, has achieved his strategic objective. He has a strong, dominant knight on d4, while Black no longer has any tactics associated with the ...d5-d4 break) and now:

B1) 18.♕xc5 bxc5 19.♗a4 does not promise anything, since Black has an excellent game after 19...♗d7!. Note how many times this 'little' move solves Black's queenside development problems. Hence, it is handy for Black to keep the knight on the board: 20.♗b3 c4 (here this move is justified. Black surrenders the d4-square, but gets strong pressure on White's b2 pawn) 21.♗c2 ♘c6 22.♗a4 ♘e5! 23.♗xd7 ♘xd7 24.b3 (or 24.♖d1? ♖b8!) 24...♖b8;

B2) 18.♗e2 ♕xa3 19.bxa3 ♘d7 20.♘d4 ♘c5 21.♖b1! b5 22.♖c1 ♖c8 23.♘xe6 fxe6 24.a4! bxa4 25.♗xa6 ♖a8 26.♗b5 ♘e4



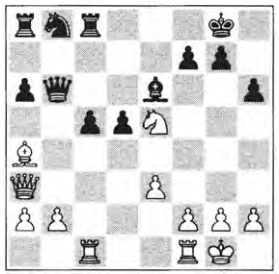
analysis diagram

27.♗d3! ♔f7 28.♗xe4 dxe4 29.g4! a3 30.♖c3 and White is better in the endgame, since Black's rook is doomed to passivity.

16. 0-0 ♖a8-a7

This is one of the logical moves here; however, moving the queen to a better square looks to me to be perhaps more appropriate:

A) 16...♕b7 promised Black a good game after 17.♗a4 ♕b6 18.♘e5



analysis diagram

18...a5!. As already mentioned, this move is always useful for Black in those positions. Black has a comfortable game and violent attempts like 19.f4? would only get White in trouble after 19...♖a7! 20.f5 ♗d7 21.f6 ♕b4!.

If 19.♘d3, then – thanks to 18...a5! – 19...♘a6.

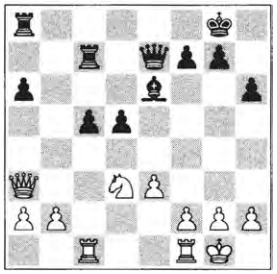
B) Another good standard plan here (as already shown in a number of previous comments) is 16...♕a7, and Black is doing OK after 17.♗a4 a5!.

C) Another interesting option was 16...♘c6!?. According to general principles this move should be wrong, since:

1. Black should try to keep the knight on the board, and:

2. Black should also avoid the ...c5-c4 push, which would surrender the d4-square.

But there is a tactical justification, since after 17.♗xc6 ♖xc6 18.♘e5 ♖c7 19.♘d3



analysis diagram

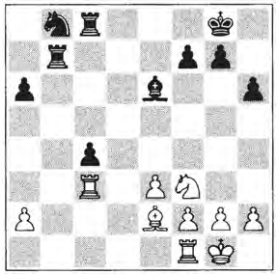
19...c4! the weakness of White's b2 pawn, which will be hit by Black's rooks, more than compensates for the general inferiority of Black's bishop versus White's knight here. It is important to note that with rooks on the board, the white b2 pawn weakness here provides Black with an excellent game, while without rooks on the board Black would have been positionally lost (!).

17. ♗b5-e2 ♘b8-d7

A) Black could also opt for the earlier explained strategy of surrendering the d4-square for the sake of pressure on the b2 pawn with 17...c4!? 18.♕xe7 ♖xe7, although Black's dynamic play does not seem sufficient for equality this time, and White keeps the advantage after 19.b3! (immediate action is needed; Black has nothing to worry about in the case of 19.♘d4 ♘c6 20.♘xe6 fxe6 21.b3 ♖ec7! 22.bxc4 ♘e5) 19...♖ec7 20.bxc4! (eliminating the b-pawn weakness once and for all and creating a weak c-pawn for Black to worry about. Drawish is 20.♖c3 cxb3! 21.♖xc7 ♖xc7 22.axb3 ♖c3 23.♘d4

♘c6; while in the case of 20.♘d4 Black uses the aforementioned equalizing mechanism with 20...♘c6 21.♘xe6 fxe6 22.bxc4 ♘e5) 20...dxc4 21.♖c3 ♖b7.

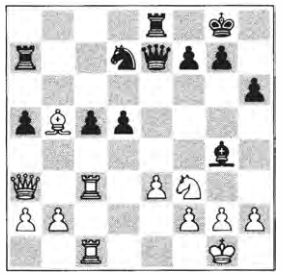
Black tries to get active in order to compensate for his c4 weakness.



analysis diagram

22.♖fc1! ♖b2 23.♘d4 ♘d7 24.♔f1! ♗d5 25.f3! with e4 to come, and Black is in trouble;

B) The standard 17...a5 does not work so well now, because of the vulnerability of the c5 pawn, for instance: 18.♖c3 ♘d7 19.♖fc1 ♖e8? (19...♗g4 was better) 20.♗b5 and White was clearly better in Furman-Geller, Moscow 1970, since 20...♗g4...



analysis diagram

... fails to 21.♖xc5! ♗xf3 22.♖c8!.

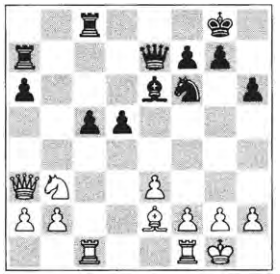
18. ♘f3-d4!

Still using the motifs based on the pin on the black queen. It is quite possible that Spassky reckoned chiefly with 18.b4, when after 18...c4 Black has active play.

18. ... ♕e7-f8?

Black's first real mistake in the game. Defending the queen with 18...♔f8 is not good due to 19.b4 and, compared to the previous 18.b4 comment, White has made a useful move (♘d4) while the black king can now only become exposed on f8.

But Black had a rather satisfactory response in 18...♘f6 19.♘b3.



analysis diagram

White would be better in the endgame after 19...♘e4 20.f3 c4 21.♕xe7 ♖xe7 22.♘d4; or 19...c4 20.♕xe7 ♖xe7 21.♘d4; retreating the knight with 19...♘d7 is passive and does not solve anything after 20.♖c3 with ♖fc1 to come.

But the tactical defence 19...♖ac7! offers Black good prospects:

A) 20.♗xa6? is a blunder which loses material after 20...♖a8 21.♖xc5 (or 21.♘xc5 ♗c8 22.b4 ♕d6 23.e4 (23.b5? ♘e4) 23...♘d7 24.♖fd1 ♗xa6 25.♖xd5 ♕e7) 21...♖ca7 22.♕b4 ♘e4 23.a3 ♘xc5 24.♘xc5 ♖c7 25.♘xe6 ♕xb4 26.axb4 fxe6 27.b5 ♖c2;

B) In the case of 20.♕xa6?! Black has the simple 20...♖a7 21.♕b6 c4 (or 21...♖b7 22.♕a5 c4 23.♘d4 ♖xb2) 22.♘d4 ♖b7 23.♕a6 ♖xb2, in all cases with better prospects for Black;

C) 20.♖fd1, and now Black continues his dynamic play with 20...d4! (the side with parallel hanging pawns in the centre should play energetically!) 21.♘a5! (White has to be careful not to end up worse; 21.♗xa6? is not good, losing material due to 21...♖a8, and if 22.♘xc5 ♗c8 23.exd4 ♗xa6) 21...♗d5! 22.♗c4 ♕e6! 23.♖e1 ♕b6 24.♗xd5 ♘xd5 25.♘c4 ♕g6 with a dynamic position, where Black is not worse.

19. ♘d4xe6 f7xe6
20. e3-e4!

Thematic play. Black can now either allow the position to be opened, when White's light-squared bishop would be powerful and Black's central pawns would be targeted, or – a much worse option, chosen in the game – try to keep the position closed by responding with ...d5-d4.

20. ... d5-d4?

An inexplicable mistake for a player of Spassky's calibre. Did he really fear Fischer so much? White now gets a free hand to attack on the kingside, and his bishop gets open diagonals, while Black does not have any counterplay and is doomed to wait in agony for the inevitable to happen.

Black's position is already difficult, but it could have been better defended. One way is to try and provoke White to play e4-e5 with the black pawn on d5, so that Black can set up a pawn chain with e6, d5, c4, and try to constrain the white bishop:

A) 20...♘f6 21.♕h3! (forcing Black to defend the e6 pawn with a rook. If 21.e5, 21...♘d7 22.f4 c4 23.♕h3 ♘c5) 21...♖c6 22.e5 ♘e4 (22...♘d7 23.f4 with an attack) 23.f3 (23.♕e3, intending f2-f3, is also possible) 23...♘g5 24.♕h5 c4 25.h4 ♕c5+ 26.♔h2 ♘f7 27.f4 ♕e3 28.♖c3 ♕d2 29.♖g3 with an immediate attack;

B) 20...c4? would ultimately lose material after 21.♕h3 ♕f7 (or 21...♘c5 22.b4 cxb3 23.axb3) 22.♗h5 ♕e7 (or 22...g6? 23.♗g4) 23.exd5 exd5 24.♗f3 ♖c5 25.b4! cxb3 26.♖xc5 ♕xc5 27.♕e6+ ♔h8 28.♗xd5 ♘f6 29.♗xb3;

C) Probably the best for Black is to try and keep his stuff together with 20...♕d6!. Now the black pieces look clumsy, but it is difficult to find anything concrete for White, for example: 21.exd5 (or 21.♖fd1 ♕e5) 21...exd5 22.♖fd1 (or 22.♗g4 ♖c6! and, clumsy or not, Black holds: 23.♖fe1 ♘e5) 22...♘f6 23.b4 ♕e6! 24.♖e1 cxb4.

21. f2-f4

In a higher sense, Black is lost now. White has achieved the dream scenario in the 'parallel hanging pawns in the centre'-structure: the timely e3-e4 has provoked the desired effect, White's light-squared bishop has full control of the weakened a2-g8 and b1-h7 diagonals, his pawn majority on the kingside is advancing with devastating effect, and Black has no counterplay whatsoever.

Having Bobby Fischer sitting on the other side of the board does not help either.

21. ... ♕f8-e7
22. e4-e5 ♖c8-b8

If 22...♘b6:

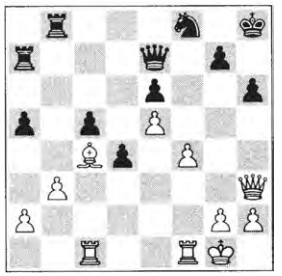
A) Wrong is 23.f5? because of 23...c4! (23...exf5?? is a terrible blunder due to 24.♕b3+) 24.♕a5 ♕c5! and Black is fine, since the seemingly strong forced line 25.b4? ♕b5 26.a4 ♘xa4 27.♖xc4 ♖xc4 28.♕d8+ ♔h7 29.fxe6 does not work as Black has 29...♖c8!;

B) 23.♕d3 ♘d5 24.♕e4 and White gets a deadly ♗d3/♕e4 battery.

23. ♗e2-c4 ♔g8-h8

On 23...♘b6 White has 24.♕b3!.

24. ♕a3-h3 ♘d7-f8
25. b2-b3 a6-a5



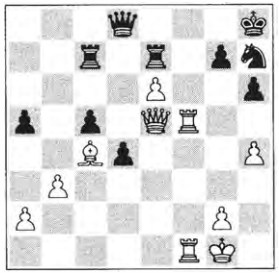
Now the time is right for White to start direct action on the kingside.

26. f4-f5 e6xf5
27. ♖f1xf5 ♘f8-h7
28. ♖c1-f1

It is never too late to do something stupid and lose a winning position with a blunder like 28.♖f7?? ♘g5.

28. ... ♕e7-d8
29. ♕h3-g3 ♖a7-e7
30. h2-h4 ♖b8-b7
31. e5-e6! ♖b7-c7
32. ♕g3-e5

A sad situation for Black. Without any counterplay he is confined to a few passive moves, waiting for annihilation.

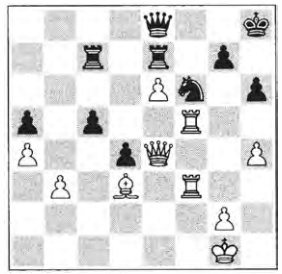


32. ... ♕d8-e8
33. a2-a4

White has plenty of time for everything.

33. ... ♕e8-d8
34. ♖f1-f2 ♕d8-e8
35. ♖f2-f3 ♕e8-d8
36. ♗c4-d3 ♕d8-e8
37. ♕e5-e4 ♘h7-f6

37...♖xe6 runs into the forced 38.♖f8+ ♘xf8 39.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 40.♕h7 mate.



38. ♖f5xf6 g7xf6
39. ♖f3xf6 ♔h8-g8
40. ♗d3-c4!

Threatening 41.♖f7.

40. ... ♔g8-h8
41. ♕e4-f4 1-0

Positions with parallel hanging pawns in the centre are difficult to play for both sides, since there are lots of dynamic possibilities involved and a keen eye for detail is needed. There are a number of well-known plans, but it has to be thoroughly checked whether they can be applied in the exact situation on the board.

Being a 1.d2-d4 player I have had plenty of such positions in my own games (mostly playing against the hanging pawns) and I have seen the pros and cons. The following two examples from my own practice show the sensitivity of these positions and how easily things can go wrong.

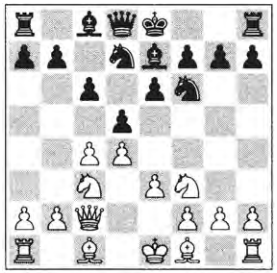
SL 8.3 (D45) **GAME 37**

Ivan Sokolov

Alexander Khalifman

Pardubice 1994 (3)

1.	**d2-d4**	**d7-d5**
2.	**c2-c4**	**c7-c6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♘g8-f6**
4.	**e2-e3**	**e7-e6**
5.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘b8-d7**
6.	**♕d1-c2**	**♗f8-e7**



I guess that the main idea behind the choice for this move (as opposed to 6...♗d6) is to avoid a theoretical discussion. In almost all lines, the bishop is better placed on d6, where, among other things, it supports the liberating move ...e6-e5.

7. b2-b3

The most common move here, since Black does not have ...e6-e5. White can also opt for 7.♗d3, but then Black has the opportunity to try and prove that his bishop is well-placed on e7 by playing 7...c5, and after 8.0-0 cxd4 9.exd4 dxc4 10.♗xc4 0-0 11.♖d1 ♘b6 12.♗b3 ♗d7 13.♘e5 ♗c6 14.♖d3 (applying a rook transfer we have already seen in the Isolated Pawn chapter) 14...♖c8 15.♕e2 ♘bd5 16.♖g3 ♘xc3 17.bxc3 ♗e4! 18.♗h6 ♗g6 19.♘xg6 hxg6 and the game was more or less equal in Tkachiev-Vaisser, French Championship, Aix-les-Bains 2007.

7. ... b7-b6

In the absence of the ...e6-e5 break, Black has to develop his light-squared bishop to b7. We also have this type of lines with the black bishop on d6 instead of e7, and again this looks (to me at least) like the more natural development. You may have understood by now that I am not fond of the 6...♗e7 line.

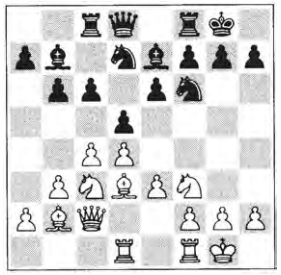
8.	**♗f1-d3**	**♗c8-b7**
9.	**0-0**	**0-0**
10.	**♗c1-b2**	**♖a8-c8**

In the case of 10...c5, 11.cxd5 exd5 12.♖ad1 ♖c8 would transpose to the game.

Black can also postpone all decisions and first play a useful move with 10...h6. Then, after 11.♖ad1 ♕c7, White can either take action in the centre with 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♘f6 15.♘e5, or play 12.♘e5 and follow plans similar to

Kramnik-Van Wely, shown further on in the comments.

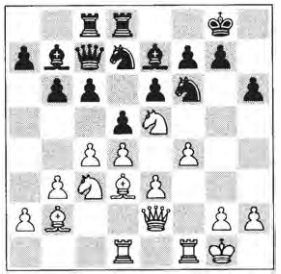
11. ♖a1-d1



11. ... c6-c5

Instead of taking action in the centre, Black can also opt for the logical developing move 11...♕c7. In the following game, White's play was instructive and the plan he used can be employed in similar types of position:

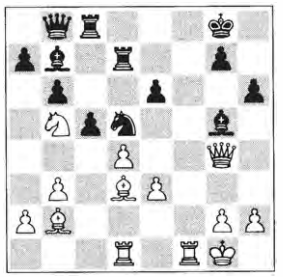
12.♘e5!? (another standard plan here is 12.e4) 12...h6 13.♕e2 ♖fd8 14.f4.



analysis diagram

The point behind 12.♘e5. White's wing attack is now correctly answered with central counterplay:

14...c5! 15.cxd5 ♘xd5 16.♘b5 ♕b8 17.♘xd7 ♖xd7 18.f5! (White has already taken a substantial positional risk, so there is no way back; he has to pursue his original plan, even if it involves sacrificing material) 18...♗g5 19.fxe6 fxe6 (or 19...♗xe3+ 20.♔h1 fxe6 21.♕g4, transposing to the game) 20.♕g4

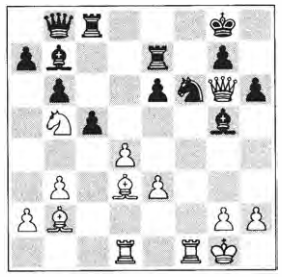


analysis diagram

20...♖e7?

A losing mistake. The pawn on e3 had to be taken after all: 20...♗xe3+! 21.♔h1 ♘f4! 22.♖xf4 ♕xf4 23.♕xe6+ ♖f7 24.♖f1 ♗f2 25.d5 (25.♗g6?? allows mate in two – 25...♗xg2+ 26.♔xg2 ♕f3 mate; while in the case of 25.♕g6? ♖d8 there is no follow-up for White) 25...♖d8 26.♗c4 (26.♗g6? ♗xd5 27.♗xf7+ ♕xf7 28.♕xf7+? ♗xf7) 26...♗c8! 27.♕e2 ♗g4 and Black fights off the attack.

21.♕e4 ♘f6 22.♕g6



analysis diagram

22...♔h8 23.dxc5 (with the involvement of the b2 bishop, the white attack

cannot be stopped) 23...♖xc5 24.♖xf6 gxf6 25.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 26.♕xf6+ ♖g7 27.♕xh6+ ♔g8 28.♕xe6+ ♔h8 29.♕h6+ ♔g8 30.e4 and White soon won in Kramnik-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

12. c4xd5 e6xd5
13. d4xc5 b6xc5

So we have reached one of the typical positions with parallel hanging pawns in the centre. White is going to put pressure on the c5 and d5 pawns (mostly d5), trying to force Black to make a decision in the centre – pushing c5-c4 or d5-d4 – while Black will try to coordinate his pieces and look for dynamic possibilities related, mostly, to the ...d5-d4 pawn break.

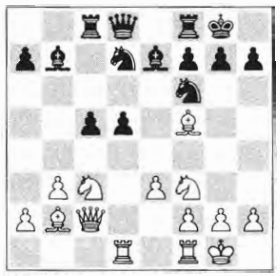
Capturing 13...♖xc5? and opting for an isolated pawn structure instead of hanging pawns in the centre, would have been a grave positional mistake, since Black cannot develop any active piece play here to compensate for the isolated pawn. After such positional resignation, things can go very wrong very quickly: 14.♕b1 ♖e8 15.♘e2! ♖c8 16.♘f4 h6? (a small move with big consequences) 17.♗f5! ♖c7 18.♘d4 ♗a6 19.♘de6 1-0 Polugaevsky-Comas Fabrego, Palma de Mallorca GMA 1989.

14. ♗d3-f5!

Pinning the d7 knight and increasing the pressure on the d5 pawn (the c5 pawn is well defended and cannot be hit for the time being) is a standard plan here and it is the correct way to proceed.

One of the standard strategic plans in these positions is 14.e4. The idea is to force ...d5-d4 (in the case of a massive swap on e4, Black's c5 pawn would remain rather weak and easy to target) and then transfer the c3 knight via d2 to c4 and reach the constellation ♗d3/♘c4; or to leave that knight on d2, put the bishop on c4 and transfer the other knight via e1 to d3 with the constellation ♘d2/♘d3/♗c4, taking advantage of the blockade on d3 and c4 and, after that blockade is established, start advancing the e- and f-pawns (f2-f4 and e4-e5).

The problem for White is that Black gets space and possibilities for a kingside attack. Moreover, the idea outlined above is difficult to execute, for example: 14...d4 (Black also gets good counterplay in the case of 14...c4 15.bxc4 dxc4 16.♗e2 ♕c7) 15.♘b1 ♘g4! (Black has to be quick and must not give White time to achieve ♘a3-c4, h2-h3, ♗b2-c1) 16.♘bd2 ♕c7! 17.♘c4 f5! and Black has taken the initiative; his pieces coordinate very well. It is clear that White's strategy has failed.



14. ... g7-g6?

Not a bad move in itself, but in this case it does weaken the a1-h8 diagonal, which will be one of the main reasons for Black's later problems.

It was better to postpone this decision. A logical option was to play a useful move like 14...♖e8 and after 15.♘e2 ♖c7!, Black seems to be doing OK, since after 16.♘f4 he can choose between 16...♗d6 and 16...d4.

15. ♗f5-h3 a7-a6

Black would like to put his rook on c7 (in order to unpin his d7 knight), but could not do this immediately due to 16.♘b5.

16. ♘c3-e2!

White is trying to take advantage of the weakened a1-h8 diagonal.

16. ... ♖c8-c7
17. ♕c2-c3 ♘d7-b6

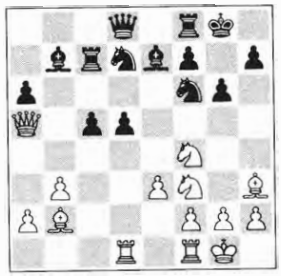
Black was worried about the d-file pressure and a different kind of tactics based on a battery with ♕c3/♗b2. Another option was 17...♖e8.

18. ♕c3-a5 ♘b6-d7

White has pressure along the d-file, and his bishops are coordinating well, so Black has problems.

18...♘c8, hoping for a transfer to e4 via d6, would run into 19.♘f4.

19. ♘e2-f4



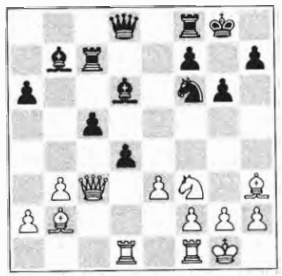
19. ... d5-d4?

Black is under pressure, so he sacrifices a pawn in order to change the character of the game. For the sacrificed pawn he will not get any meaningful compensation.

A better defence was 19...♗d6!, and now:

A) If 20.♖fe1?!, then 20...♗xf4 (not 20...d4 because of 21.♘d3!) 21.exf4 d4 22.♘e5 ♘xe5 23.fxe5 ♘d5 and Black has an excellent game, since 24.g3? runs into 24...♘f4!;

B) 20.♗xd7! ♗xf4 21.♗h3 ♗d6 22.♕c3! (back to the long diagonal, restoring the battery) 22...d4!. Black has to execute this thematic break.



White is better, but he has to be accurate:

B1) 23.exd4? is wrong due to 23...♘d5 24.♕d2 ♘f4 25.dxc5 ♗xf3 26.cxd6 ♘xh3+ 27.gxh3 (27.♔h1? loses to 27...♕a8! 28.♖g1 ♖d7! 29.gxf3 ♕xf3+ 30.♖g2 ♘xf2+) 27...♖c5;

B2) In the case of 23.♕c4 Black has at least equality with 23...♘d7!;

B3) 23.♕d3! ♗xf3 (if 23...♘d7?, then 24.exd4; or 23...♗e4 24.♕xa6) 24.gxf3 ♘d5 25.f4 and White should be better, but the position is rather complicated and Black has his chances.

20. e3xd4 ♗b7xf3
21. g2xf3 c5-c4
22. b3xc4 ♖c7xc4
23. ♕a5xa6

White has a damaged kingside pawn structure, but he has reasonable control over the position and it is difficult for Black to prove the correctness of his sacrifice.

23. ... ♖c4-c2

If 23...♘b6, then 24.♖fe1 ♖a4 25.♕b5 and now:

A) White will have a massive advantage in the case of 25...♗d6 26.♗c1!, see:

A1) 26...♖xa2?? is a blunder due to 27.♘e6;

A2) With the white rook on e1 26...♗xf4? 27.♗xf4 ♘fd5 does not work because of the simple 28.♗h6! ♘c3 29.♕e5.

B) 25...♗b4! 26.♖e2 ♗d6 and now:

B1) 27.♘d3! ♖xa2 28.♕b3 and White remains a sound pawn up;

B2) 27.♗c1 can be played, but it is less good after 27...♗xf4 28.♗xf4 ♘fd5 29.♗h6 ♘c3 30.♕e5 ♘xe2+ 31.♔h1 f6 32.♗e6+ ♔h8 33.♕xe2 ♖e8 34.d5 ♕d6 (34...♘xd5? 35.♕b5) 35.♗e3 and White has compensation, but it is difficult to say if he has more.

24. ♗b2-c1

I wanted to return one of my two extra pawns and keep things simple. It was, however, better to be greedy and try to keep both pawns, by playing 24.♘d3! ♘d5 25.♖c1 ♖d2 26.♖fd1.

24. ... ♕d8-a8
25. ♕a6xa8 ♖f8xa8
26. ♗c1-e3 ♖a8xa2

If 26...♘b6, then 27.♖a1! (27.d5?! is not good due to 27...♘c4 and Black has compensation) 27...♖cxa2 28.♖xa2 ♖xa2 29.♖b1 ♘bd5 30.♗f1 and White is a sound pawn up.

27. ♖d1-b1 ♖a2-b2
28. ♘f4-d3 ♖b2xb1
29. ♖f1xb1

White is a clear pawn up; however, due to his damaged kingside pawn structure Black keeps some drawing chances.

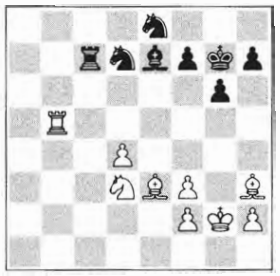
29. ... ♖c2-c7
30. ♖b1-b5!

Not allowing a blockade of d5.

30. ... ♔g8-g7
31. ♔g1-g2?!

Black was in time pressure and I wanted to keep pieces on the board, but objectively better was 31.♘e5! ♘xe5 32.dxe5 ♘d7 33.f4 ♗c5 34.♗d2, and White should win.

31. ... ♘f6-e8!



32. ♘d3-c5?

This is just wrong. Better was 32.♘e5 or 32.♗f4.

32. ... ♘d7-f6?

He does not take his chance with 32...♘xc5! 33.dxc5 f5! (shutting off the h3 bishop) 34.♔g1 ♘f6 35.♗f1 ♘d5 (not 35...♘d7?? 36.c6) 36.♗d4+ ♗f6 37.c6 ♗xd4 38.♖xd5 ♗b6 39.♗b5 ♖e7 and Black saves the game.

33. ♖b5-b8 ♗e7-d6
34. ♖b8-a8

34.♘e4? blunders a pawn to 34...♘xe4 35.fxe4 ♖e7 36.♖b6 ♖xe4.

34. ... ♖c7-e7
35. ♗e3-g5 ♖e7-e1?

The final mistake. Black would have had reasonable surviving chances after 35...h6! 36.♗h4 g5 37.♗g3 h5.

36. ♘c5-e4! ♗d6-b4
37. ♖a8-b8! ♗b4-a3?

37...♗a5! was a better response, in order to answer 38.♗f4? (38.♗e3 should win for White) with 38...♗c7.

38. ♗g5-f4!

Now Black loses more material.

38. ... ♘f6-d5
39. ♗f4-e5+

Time pressure does its job. Much better was 39.♗d2 ♖d1 40.♖xe8 f5 41.♘c3, winning a piece.

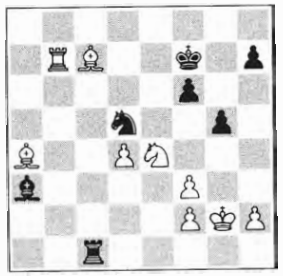
39. ... f7-f6
40. ♗e5-g3

Black still cannot prevent further material loss.

40. ... ♔g7-f7
41. ♗h3-d7 ♘e8-c7
42. ♖b8-b7 ♖e1-c1
43. ♗d7-a4 g6-g5

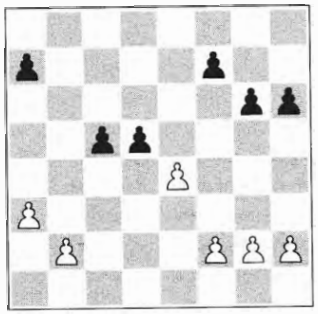
Or 43...f5 44.♗e5 ♔e7 45.♘f6 ♘xf6 46.♗xc7 ♔f8 47.♗f4 ♖c8 48.♗h6+ ♔g8 49.♗b3+.

44. ♗g3xc7!



And Black resigned in view of 44...♘xc7 45.♘c5; or 44...♖xc7 45.♗b3.

Structure 3.3



QO 8.5 (D58) **GAME 38**
Ivan Sokolov
Nigel Short
Sarajevo 1999 (6)

1.	**d2-d4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗f8-e7**
5.	**♗c1-g5**	**h7-h6**
6.	**♗g5-h4**	**0-0**
7.	**e2-e3**	**b7-b6**
8.	**♖a1-c1**	

One of the main lines of the Tartakower /Makogonov Variation, which was rather popular in the late 1980s and through the 1990s.

8.	**...**	**♗c8-b7**
9.	**♗h4xf6**	

After Black has placed his bishop on b7, White parts with his bishop pair and then takes on d5, forcing Black to recapture with the pawn, an idea we have seen in several games in this book.

9.	**...**	**♗e7xf6**
10.	**c4xd5**	**e6xd5**
11.	**♗f1-d3**	**c7-c5**
12.	**0-0**	

This is considered to be the starting position of the variation. One may wonder what White's idea could be here? After all, Black has the bishop pair, the dark-squared bishop in particular being well placed on f6, and with his last move ...c7-c5 Black even gets some pressure on White's central pawn d4.

Well, White's main idea in this variation is to force a swap on d4 and end up playing with a favourable d4/d5 pawn symmetry in the centre, where his light-squared bishop on d3 is superior to its colleague on b7, an idea we have already seen in a number of games in Chapter 2 on the Isolated Pawn. If White's idea is well executed, he will have a small, lasting advantage.

12. ... ♘b8-a6

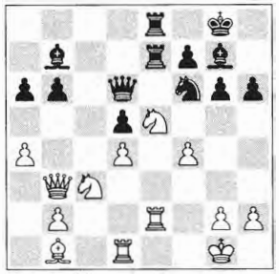
With the text Black wants to avoid the aforementioned exchange on d4 and keep the tension in the centre – which is a reasonable plan in general. However, the black knight is a bit clumsy on a6, and the text move is considered to be one of the sidelines.

The position is interesting from a strategic prospective. It requires both sides to be on the alert for central exchanges, because three different pawn structures may easily arise here: with an isolated pawn, with central pawn symmetry, or with hanging pawns in the centre. For a better understanding of the pros and cons of the position I shall give a few lines.

A) 12...♘d7 is considered to be the main line. Quite some time ago, in Biel 1989, I had a game against Hellers which continued 13.♗f5, increasing the pressure on Black's central pawns and trying to force Black to make a decision in the centre. 13.♗b1 has also been tried, but this allows Black to continue normal development with 13...♖e8 and after 14.dxc5 ♘xc5 15.♘d4 g6 Black has a comfortable isolated pawn-position.

After 13.♗f5 there followed:

A1) 13...cxd4 (definitely not a mistake; however, it allows White to fulfil his strategic objectives) 14.exd4 g6 15.♗d3 ♗g7 16.♕b3 (White has slight pressure on d5, his d3 bishop is considerably better placed than its black counterpart, and White's f3 knight is likely to enter on e5. Black, however, has a strong bishop on g7 and his pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal can be an important source of counterplay) 16...a6 17.♖fe1 ♖c8 18.a4 ♘f6 19.♖cd1 (eliminating the tactics related to Black's ...♘f6-e4) 19...♕d6 20.♘e5 (the f3 knight has found its dominant post) 20...♖c7 21.♖e2 ♖e8 22.f4 ♖ce7 23.♗b1 (time to move the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal)



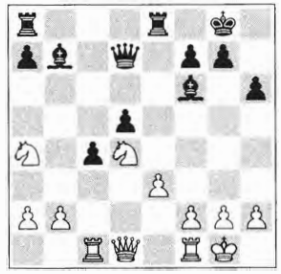
analysis diagram

23...♘e4? (getting short of time, Black goes for a desperate counterplay attempt, which simply loses a pawn. However, the position was far from clear and Black had to undermine the dominant e5 knight with 23...g5! 24.fxg5 hxg5, threatening ...♘f6-g4) 24.♘xe4 dxe4 25.♗xe4 ♗xe4 26.♖xe4 and I was a sound pawn up and soon won.

Black had two other acceptable continuations.

A2) He can stay calm and play the useful 13...♖e8. Surprisingly enough, this continuation has rarely occurred in practice; nevertheless, Black's position is solid and healthy and White cannot prove an advantage, for example:

A21) After 14.♗xd7 ♕xd7 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♘a4 c4 17.♘d4, we reach one of the classic positions with hanging pawns in the centre.



analysis diagram

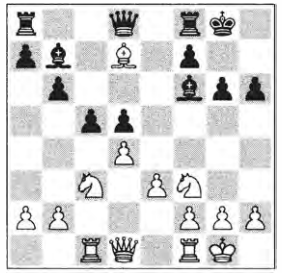
White has a perfect blockade with his knights on c3 and d4, Black has an excellent bishop on f6 and a passive one on b7; and also, Black has a little more space. There is a dynamic balance and the position is about equal.

A similar pawn structure with the same blockade (White: ♘c3, ♘d4 – Black: pawns c4, d5, bishop on b7 and bishop on e5), but more favourable for White, was seen in Game 17 of the Capablanca-Alekhine World Championship match 1927. Despite these better circumstances, the legendary Cuban was not able to take advantage of his perfect blockade and the game ended in a draw.

A22) 14.♕a4 ♘f8 15.♖fd1 g6! (an important move. White has some pressure in the event of 15...♘e6 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.♕g4) 16.♗h3 ♘e6 17.dxc5 bxc5! (the correct decision. White has

some advantage in the isolated pawn-position ensuing after 17...♘xc5 18.♕c2) 18.♕b3 ♖b8 19.♘xd5 ♗xd5 20.♖xd5 ♖xb3 21.♖xd8 ♖xd8 22.axb3 ♗xb2 23.♖b1 ♗c3 24.♖c1 (otherwise 24...♖b8, threatening 25...c4) 24...♗b2 with equality.

A3) Also possible for Black is 13...g6 and after 14.♗xd7,



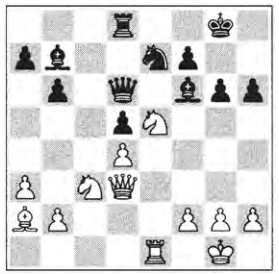
analysis diagram

... the zwischenzug 14...cxd4! (a mistake would have been 14...♕xd7? due to 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.♘e4 ♗xb2 17.♘xc5 ♕e7 18.♖b1 ♕xc5 19.♖xb2 and now White achieves a perfect blockade with a strong knight against a bad bishop) 15.♗c6 (winning a tempo compared to 15.♘xd4 ♕xd7) 15...♗xc6 16.♘xd4 ♗b7 and the strong bishop on f6 fully compensates for the isolated d5 pawn, Kasimdzhanov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

B) 12...♖e8 has also been tried in practice, with the idea to keep the tension in the centre, while making a useful move;

C) 12...♕e7 was played once by Helgi Olafsson against me in Wijk aan Zee 1991. Black tries to achieve the same objectives as with 12...♖e8, but this has the drawback that after 13.♖e1 White threatens the unpleasant e3-e4;

D) Finally, 12...cxd4 has also been played many times. It immediately hands White his strategic objectives (a d4/d5 central pawn symmetry with the superior light-squared bishop), but now Black keeps the possibility to develop his knight to the natural c6-square: 13.exd4 (13.♘xd4 ♘c6 14.♘xc6 ♗xc6 15.♘e2 ♕d6 16.♕d2, playing against the isolated pawn, gives White a very small plus) 13...♘c6 14.♗b1 ♖e8 15.♕d3 g6 16.♖fe1 ♕d6 17.a3 ♖xe1+ 18.♖xe1 ♖d8 19.♗a2 ♘e7 20.♘e5 and White had a standard, well-known, small advantage in Karpov-Portisch, Skelleftea World Cup 1989.



13. ♗d3-b1 ♖f8-e8
14. a2-a3

With his last two moves White is getting ready to transfer his bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal, at the right time.

14. ... g7-g6
15. ♖f1-e1

Preparing to hit Black's hanging central pawns with e3-e4 (after the pawn swap d4xc5 b6xc5).

15. ... ♕d8-d7
16. d4xc5

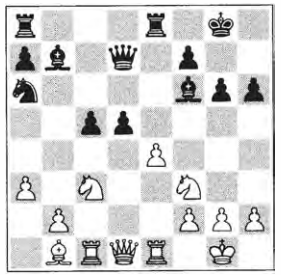
Putting the question to Black which type of pawn structure he wants to play.

16. ... b6xc5

Playing an isolated pawn-type position after 16...♘xc5 was a reasonable choice.

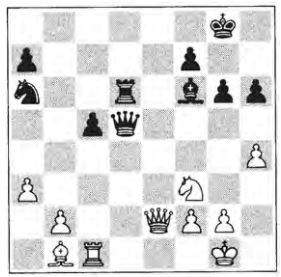
17. e3-e4

Executing the plan prepared with a3, ♗b1, ♖e1.



17. ... d5-d4

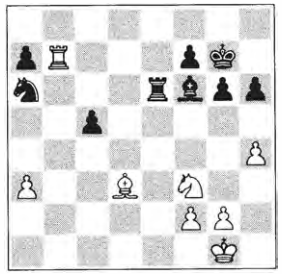
Black is not worried about the weakening of his light squares on the f1-a6 and a2-g8 diagonals. I think that better, and more principled, was 17...♖ad8! when the bishop on f6 is strong and Black has a good game: 18.exd5 ♖xe1+ 19.♕xe1 ♗xd5 20.♘xd5 (or 20.♖d1 ♕e6 21.♕xe6 ♗xe6 22.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 23.♘e5 ♘b8) 20...♕xd5 21.♕e2 ♖d6 22.h4.



analysis diagram

A) Immediate activity with 22...♕b3? is wrong due to 23.♗c2! ♕xb2 24.♖b1 and now:

A1) 24...♕a2 does not solve Black's problems after 25.♕e8+ ♔g7 26.♖b7 ♕e6 27.♕xe6 ♖xe6 28.♗d3!.



analysis diagram

Black's knight on a6 is doomed. 28...♗d4 29.♗c4 ♖f6 30.♔f1! (with the other pieces already on perfect posts, it's time for White to improve his king) 30...g5 (a counterplay attempt that does not work) 31.hxg5 hxg5 32.♘xg5 ♖xf2+ 33.♔e1 ♖f6 (33...♖xg2? loses a piece to the simple 34.♘e6+ ♔h6 35.♘xd4 cxd4 36.♗xa6 ♖a2 37.♖b3) 34.♘xf7 ♔g6 35.g4 and White wins;

A2) 24...♕xa3?? is a terrible blunder due to 25.♕e8+ ♔g7 26.♗b3;

A3) 24...♖e6 25.♕c4 ♕xa3 (if 25...♕c3, then 26.♗b3 ♕xc4 27.♗xc4 ♖c6 28.♖b7 ♘c7 29.♖xa7) 26.♗xg6 ♘b4 27.♗f5 ♖e7 (27...♖c6? loses to 28.♖e1) 28.♕xc5 and due to his weakened kingside Black is in trouble.

B) 22...♔g7! 23.♗e4 ♕a2 24.♖c2 ♖e6 25.h5 g5 with a sharp game where Black is definitely not worse.

18. ♗b1-a2

This is one of the typical positions with the hanging pawns in the centre-structure. With e3-e4, White has provoked ...d5-d4, which has given White strong control of the f1-a6 and a2-g8 diago-

nals and an excellent blockade on d3 and c4 in many cases. Black's c5 pawn is also rather weak. The position is objectively better for White, but exact play is needed. Black has the bishop pair (both of them are working now) and a potentially strong passed d-pawn, so – as we are about to see – the tables can turn quickly.

Please note that this pawn structure is far better for White than the similar one discussed in the previous game Sokolov-Khalifman, where I suggest 14.e4 in the comments, instead of the game move 14.♗f5. Here White does not have the dark-squared bishop on b2; he has exchanged that bishop for Black's knight on f6, which is rather useful.

The text looks logical in itself, but White had a strong and straightforward way to achieve an advantage: 18.♘a4 ♖ac8 19.♗d3 (focusing on the weak c5 pawn) 19...♕d6

analysis diagram

20.♕d2! ♗g7 (going for 'counterplay' with 20...c4? 21.♗xc4 ♗xe4?? is a disastrous blunder after 22.♗xa6 ♖xc1 23.♕xc1 ♕xa6 24.♘c5 ♕c6 25.♘xe4 ♕xc1 26.♘xf6+) and now:

A) Playing for a light-square blockade with 21.b3 ♘b8 22.♘b2 ♘d7 23.♘c4 leads to a very sharp game, since Black is harmoniously developed and ready for counterplay should the position be opened, for example: 23...♕b8 24.h4 ♘f6! 25.e5 ♘g4 26.♕f4 ♗xf3 27.♘d6!

analysis diagram

27...♕xb3! (not afraid of ghosts; 27...♘xe5 is not good due to 28.♖xe5! ♖f8 29.♖exc5 ♖xc5 30.♖xc5 with a massive advantage for White) 28.♗c4 ♕b2! (the threat to take on f2 forces White to lose a crucial tempo) 29.♗xf7+ (29.♕xf3 ♘xe5 30.♕f4 ♔h7! 31.♘xc8 ♖xc8 is better for Black; or 29.♕xf7+ ♔h7 30.♕xf3 ♘xe5) 29...♔h8 30.♕xf3 ♘xe5 31.♕h3 ♖f8 32.♘xc8 ♖xf7 33.♕g3;

B) 21.♕a5!, continuing to hit the c5 weakness:

B1) Very likely, Black is forced to exchange queens; see 21...h5 22.♗b5! (not 22.♗xa6? ♕xa6 23.♕xa6 ♗xa6 24.♖xc5 (24.♘xc5? loses the exchange after 24...♗h6) 24...♗d3! 25.b4 ♗c2 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♘c5 d3 and Black's initiative is worth more than a pawn) 22...♖e7 23.e5! ♕d8 24.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 25.♗xa6 ♗xa6 26.♘xc5 and White is a sound pawn up;

B2) So, 21...♕d8 22.♕xd8 ♖exd8 23.♘d2 (taking a pawn is now very much worth considering: 23.♗xa6 ♗xa6 24.♘xc5 ♗b5 25.a4 ♗c6 26.b4 d3 27.♘d2; or 27.♖ed1) 23...♗f8 (or 23...♗f6 24.f4) 24.e5 and White is better. In most of these lines, Black is suffering because he is not able to create enough counterplay to compensate for the weakness of his c5 pawn.

18. ... ♖a8-b8!

Hitting one of the weaknesses in White's position: the b2 pawn.

18...♘c7? is bad due to 19.♘a4±.

19. ♗a2-c4?

Completely missing Black's response. White had two reasonable ways to continue:

A) 19.♕d2 and now:

A1) 19...♘c7 and now:

A11) 20.♕xh6? is a bad mistake, since White only gets a few checks for the piece after 20...dxc3! 21.♕xg6+ ♗g7 22.♘g5 ♘d5! 23.♕h7+ ♔f8;

A12) 20.♕f4 ♕e7 (if 20...♔g7, White nevertheless plays 21.♘a4! ♕xa4 (the 'tactic' 21...♘d5? 22.♗xd5 ♕xa4 loses to 23.♗xf7 ♔xf7 24.e5) 22.♕xc7 ♗e7 23.♘e5; or 20...♗g7? 21.♘a4!) 21.♘a4 g5 (21...♗c6 22.♘xc5 ♖xb2 23.♗c4 ♗g7 24.e5; 24.♘d3 ♖b6 25.e5; 21...♘a6 22.♕xh6) 22.♕g3 d3 23.♘xc5! ♗xb2 24.h4 ♗xc1 25.♖xc1 and White has a strong attack.

A2) 19...♗g7 20.♘d5 ♗c6 (if 20...♗xd5 21.♗xd5, there is a striking difference in activity between the white and the black bishop) 21.h4. The position is sharp, but White's chances seem to be preferable.

B) Interesting for White was 19.♖e2!?. White has a weak b2 pawn and that problem is now being solved. Now, 19...♘c7? is not good due to 20.♘a4 ♘a6 21.♗b1 with ♗d3 to follow (21.♗c4 ♗c6 offers Black counterplay).

However, the position looks rather unclear after 19...♗c6! 20.♘d5 ♗g7.

19. ... ♗b7-c6!

For some reason I had completely missed this strong reply. 19...♘c7? is again not good because of 20.♘a4. The tables have already turned and White is on the defensive.

20. ♘c3-d5

Black is better after 20.♗xa6 dxc3 21.♕xd7 ♗xd7 22.bxc3

analysis diagram

22...♖b3! (better than 22...♗c6 23.e5 ♗g7 24.♗c4 ♗xf3 25.e6 fxe6 26.♖xe6 ♖xe6 27.♗xe6+ ♔f8 28.gxf3 and White escapes with a draw) 23.e5 ♖xa3.

20. ... ♗c6xd5

21. e4xd5

White does not have enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn after 21.♗xd5 ♖xb2 22.♕d3 ♖b6 23.♗c4 ♘c7 24.e5 ♗g7.

21. ... ♘a6-c7

22. ♕d1-d2

Better was 22.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 (or 22...♖xe8 23.♕d2) 23.♕d2 ♔g7, reaching the game position.

22. ... ♔g8-g7

Black now had an extra opportunity in 22...♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1 ♔g7 and White has problems defending his d5 pawn, since Black is better after 24.♘e5 ♗xe5 25.♖xe5 ♕d6.

23. ♖e1xe8 ♘c7xe8

24. ♘f3-e1

Black has a perhaps very small, but lasting and unpleasant advantage.

A) If White tries to simplify with 24.b4, he is still worse after 24...♘d6 25.♗d3 (25.bxc5? is wrong due to 25...♘xc4 26.♖xc4 ♕xd5) 25...cxb4 26.axb4 ♘b5 27.♖c6 ♖b6! (27...♘c3?? blunders a piece after the simple 28.♖xf6 ♔xf6 29.♕f4+) 28.♗xb5 ♖xb5 29.♕f4 (29.♖xf6 does not work after 29...♔xf6 30.♕xd4+ ♔e7 31.♕e5+♔d8) 29...♕d8!;

B) Or 24.♗a2 ♘d6!;

C) Solving the problem of the b2 weakness with 24.b3 does not help after 24...♘c7 25.♕a5 ♘xd5 26.♕xc5 ♘f4.

24. ... ♘e8-d6

25. ♘e1-d3 ♕d7-f5!

Keeping the initiative.

26. ♕d2-c2

If 26.♘xc5, unpleasant for White is 26...♘xc4 27.♖xc4 ♕b1+ (27...♕xd5 28.♖c1 ♗g5! 29.f4 ♗f6 is also better for Black) 28.♖c1 ♖xb2! 29.d6 ♕a2.

26. ... ♖b8-e8

27. h2-h3 ♗f6-g5

28. ♖c1-d1 h6-h5

29. b2-b3 h5-h4

Seizing space on the kingside.

30. ♕c2-b2 ♗g5-f6!

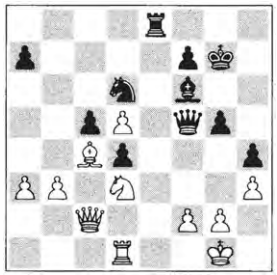
31. ♕b2-c2

Like it or not, White is forced into a passive defence. I was definitely not in the mood to calculate the consequences of 31.♘xc5 d3 (the simple 31...♕c8 32.♘d3 ♘xc4 33.bxc4 ♕xc4 34.♘f4 (or 34.♕b7 ♖e7) 34...♕c3! 35.♕xc3 dxc3 36.d6 ♖d8 also looks good enough for Black) 32.♕c1 ♗d4 33.♘xd3 ♘e4 or 33...♖e2.

If 31.♖d2 (planning 32.♖e2), 31...♖d8! 32.♘xc5 (32.♕c2 ♘e4) 32...♕c8 33.♘d3 ♘xc4 34.bxc4 ♕xc4 and Black is a sound pawn up. The black pieces are already very well placed and it is difficult to improve them.

Needless to say, Black's next move came as a surprise to me.

31. ... g6-g5!



32. f2-f3??

A truly horrible move, surrendering all the squares and bringing the game to an end. Black's ...g5-g4 was not such a terrible threat at all, and even if it were, it is better to get mated than to allow such positional capitulation.

Looking at this horrible, ugly move I managed to produce, I cannot help but recall Yasser Seirawan's quote: 'Thank God the grandmaster title is for life'.

I still had an acceptable defence in 32.♖f1! (planning ♕d1, to cover the g4-square) 32...g4 33.hxg4 ♕xg4 34.♕d1. With his last few active moves, Black has also created some weaknesses of his own and the game has become rather unclear.

32. ... ♖e8-e3

33. ♕c2-d2 ♗f6-e5

All these vital squares White has surrendered with one stupid move.

34. ♗c4-a6 ♕f5-f6

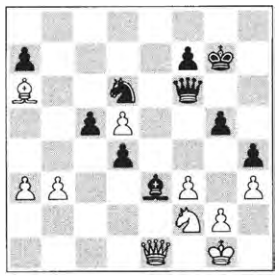
35. ♖d1-e1 ♗e5-f4

36. ♕d2-d1 ♖e3xe1+

37. ♕d1xe1 ♗f4-e3+

38. ♘d3-f2

Sad reality: 38.♔h1 ♘f5 39.♗c4 ♘g3+ 40.♔h2 ♕d6 forces White into a mating net. White is completely paralysed and many moves win here.



38. ... ♘d6-f5

39. ♗a6-d3 ♘f5-g3

40. ♕e1-d1 ♕f6-e5

41. ♕d1-c2 ♕e5xd5

42. b3-b4 c5xb4

43. a3xb4 ♕d5-e5

And White resigned.

QO 7.10 (D58) **GAME 39**

Vladimir Kramnik
Artur Yusupov
Dortmund 1998 (6)

1. ♘g1-f3 d7-d5

2. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

3. c2-c4 e7-e6

4. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7

5. ♗c1-g5 h7-h6

6. ♗g5-h4 0-0

7. e2-e3 b7-b6

8. ♗f1-d3 ♗c8-b7

9. 0-0 ♘b8-d7

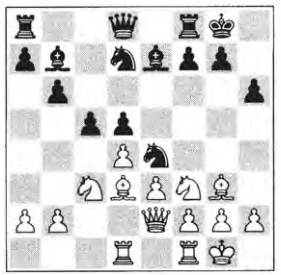
10. ♕d1-e2 c7-c5

11. ♗h4-g3 ♘f6-e4

For 11...cxd4, and also for comments on White's alternative 10.♕e2, we refer you to Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky – Game 28 in the Isolated Pawns chapter.

12. c4xd5 e6xd5

13. ♖a1-d1



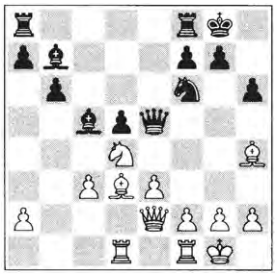
This is one of the critical positions in this popular variation. In grandmaster practice, Black has tried all the logical possibilities here.

13. ... ♘e4xg3

Black decides to eliminate White's dark-squared bishop. However, given the fact that the white knight on c3 exerts pressure on Black's d5 pawn and White's g3 bishop is not causing any particular trouble at the moment, Black can keep the knight on e4 (keeping the option of exchanging White's c3 knight at any moment) and maintain tension in the centre by playing, for example, 13...♕c8, as in our next featured game. Let me give a short survey of the options in this position.

A) 13...cxd4?! (the wrong plan. Black voluntarily releases the tension in the centre, giving White a free hand to take advantage of his well-placed pieces) 14.♗xe4! (instead of playing an isolated pawn-position, White prefers a favourable symmetry) 14...dxe4 15.♘xd4. White controls the d-file, his knight is excellently placed on d4, his bishop is working well on g3 and Black's b7 bishop is passive, hitting its own pawn on e4. All in all, White is clearly better;

B) 13...♘df6 14.dxc5! (changing the pawn structure and creating an isolated pawn on d5 for Black, while the white weakness on c3 will hardly be felt) 14...♘xc3 15.bxc3 ♗xc5 16.♘d4 ♕e7 17.♗h4 ♕e5



analysis diagram

18.f4 (18.♗c2 deserves attention, since if Black tries to become active with 18...♘e4? 19.f3 ♗d6 he loses material after 20.g3 ♘c5 21.f4 ♕e8 22.♘f5 ♕e6 23.c4) 18...♕d6 19.♘b3 ♖fe8 20.♘xc5 bxc5 21.c4 ♕e6 22.♗xf6 ♕xf6 23.cxd5 ♗xd5 24.e4 c4 25.♗b1 and White started rolling his pawn majority on the kingside, obtaining the initiative, Vyzhmanavin-A. Petrosian, Palma de Mallorca 1989;

C) For 13...♕c8, according to current theory the best reply, see the next game;

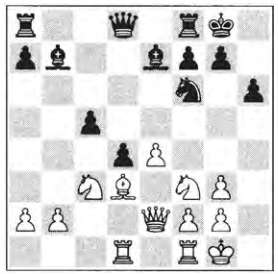
D) Putting the dark-squared bishop on a natural square, on the long diagonal, with 13...♗f6?! does not work well after 14.♗xe4! dxe4 15.♘e5 ♗xe5 16.dxe5 ♕e7 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.♖xd5.

14. h2xg3 a7-a6

Preparing ...c5-c4, to be followed by ...b6-b5. However, White's reaction will prove this to be almost a loss of tempo. Black has few useful moves here:

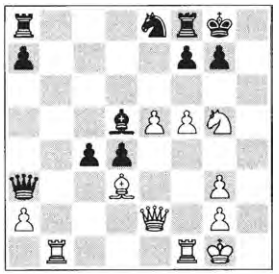
A) A logical developing move like 14...♘f6 has the shortcoming that at a critical moment it gives White an important tempo, after 15.dxc5 bxc5 (with again a typical position with hanging pawns in the centre) and now:

A1) 16.e4! (like in my game against Short, this typical break is an essential part of White's strategy) 16...d4



analysis diagram

17.e5! (seizing the initiative. Regular light-square blockade play with 17.♘b1 results in an unclear game after 17...♗d6 18.♘bd2 ♖e8) 17...♘e8 18.♘e4 ♗d5 19.♘fd2!? (choosing an ambitious plan involving a pawn sacrifice. White could have obtained a risk-free advantage with 19.♗c4) 19...♕b6 20.f4 ♕xb2 21.♖b1 ♕a3 (21...♕xa2?? loses the queen after 22.♖a1 ♕b2 23.♖fb1) 22.f5 ♗g5 23.♘xg5 hxg5 24.♘e4 c4 25.♘xg5! (threatening 26.♕h5; 25.♗xc4? is a blunder due to 25...♗xc4 26.♕xc4 ♕e3+ 27.♘f2 ♕xe5)



analysis diagram

25...f6? (the losing mistake. The correct defence was 25...g6! 26.♕g4 ♘g7) 26.♗xc4 and White soon won in Moiseenko-Sargissian, Istanbul Ech 2003;

A2) Another strategic idea is 16.♗a6!?. The swap of the light-squared bishops is in general a good idea here. Black's b7 bishop is defending the potential weakness on d5 and is also an instrumental piece in any counterplay associated with the ...d5-d4 break: 16...♕b6 17.♗xb7 ♕xb7 18.♖d2 ♖fd8 19.♖fd1 ♖d6 20.♘e1 ♖ad8 21.♘d3 ♘e4 22.♖c2 ♗f6 23.♘f4 ♗xc3 24.bxc3 and White now kicked the black knight out of the centre with ♔h2 and f3, obtaining a small advantage in Vyzhmanavin-Kolev, Elenite 1993;

B) Placing the dark-squared bishop on its natural post with 14...♗f6 is a principled and rather logical decision (this position resembles the lines discussed in Sokolov-Short, Game 38), and I do not see any advantage for White, for example:

B1) Exerting pressure on d5 with 15.♗b1 ♖e8 16.♖d2 a6 17.♖c1 ♖c8 18.♕d1, in order to provoke black action in the centre, is a fruitless exercise for White, since after 18...c4! Black starts rolling his queenside pawns and takes over the initiative, as in the game Vyzhmanavin-Pigusov, Moscow 1987;

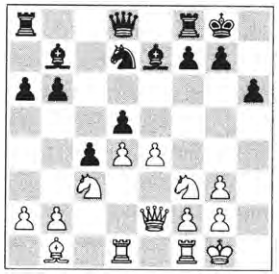
B2) Protecting the knight on c3 before taking on c5 with 15.♕c2 promises White nothing, since Black will achieve a comfortable position with parallel hanging pawns in the centre after 15...g6 16.dxc5 bxc5;

B3) 15.dxc5 ♗xc3! (an important intermezzo) 16.c6 (trying to take advantage of the d-file pin with 16.bxc3 ♘xc5 17.c4? would have bad consequences for White after 17...♘xd3 18.♖xd3 ♗a6) 16...♗xc6 17.bxc3 ♕f6; both sides have a weakness to worry about and the position is roughly equal;

C) The set-up with 14...♕c7 15.♗c2 ♖ad8 gives White somewhat better chances in an isolated pawn-position after 16.dxc5 ♘xc5 17.♘d4;

D) Another logical and ambitious option for Black is the immediate release of White's potential d-file pressure with 14...c4! and after 15.♗b1 a6, Black is ready to roll his queenside pawns,

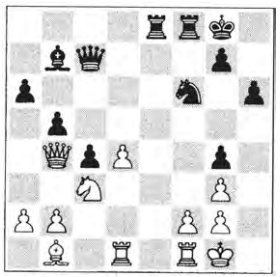
when White is forced to take immediate central action: 16.e4



analysis diagram

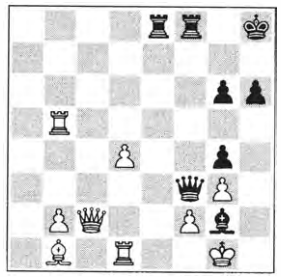
16...dxe4 (16...♖e8!? deserves attention, and if 17.e5 then 17...♘f8 – a standard plan in these positions which works most of the time) 17.♘xe4 b5.

Black has a good game and White should be careful not to end up worse. The following game is a good example: 18.♘e5 (or 18.d5 ♖e8) 18...♕c7 19.♘g4 f5 (an option was 19...♖ae8 and if 20.♘e3, 20...♗b4) 20.♘c3 fxg4 21.♕xe7 ♖ae8 22.♕b4 ♘f6.



analysis diagram

Now White needs to create counterplay immediately: 23.a4! ♘d5! 24.♘xd5 ♗xd5 25.axb5 ♕b7 26.♖fe1! axb5 27.♕d2?! (correct was 27.♖e5! with an unclear game, since 27...♗xg2?? is a bad blunder due to 28.♖xb5 ♕f3 29.♕xc4+ ♔h8 30.♕c2 g6



analysis diagram

31.♖h5! and White wins) 27...♗xg2 28.♕c2 ♖xe1+ 29.♖xe1 ♖f6! and Black was better in Babula-Bönsch, Germany Bundesliga 1999/00.

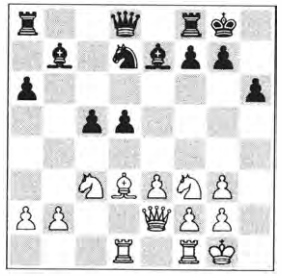
15. d4xc5!

Not giving Black another chance to close the centre with ...c5-c4.

15. ... b6xc5

Black is forced to enter a typical structure with parallel hanging pawns in the centre, and to acknowledge that his 14...a6? has been a loss of a tempo.

15...♘xc5? simply loses a pawn after 16.♗c4; 15...♗xc5? loses a pawn to the tactic 16.♘xd5! ♗xd5 17.♗h7+ ♔xh7 18.♖xd5 ♖a7 19.♖fd1 ♕e7 (a blunder is 19...♔g8? 20.♘e5 and Black is likely to lose more material) 20.♕d3+ and White regains his piece, remaining a healthy pawn up.



16. ♗d3-b1!

Kramnik correctly increases the pressure on Black's only weak spot, the d5 pawn. The standard 16.e4 d4 17.♘b1 (since the black knight is still on d7, there are no extra possibilities like e4-e5 for White here, as in Moiseenko-Sargissian), with ♘bd2 to follow, promises White a small advantage at best. It should be noted that a beautiful blockade often promises White much less than it seems to at first sight.

16. ... ♘d7-b6

16...♘f6?! simply loses a pawn after 17.♘xd5! ♘xd5 (or 17...♗xd5 18.e4) 18.e4.

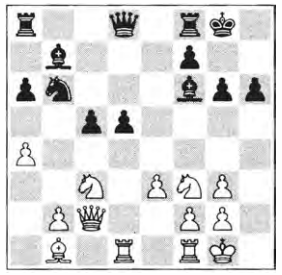
17. a2-a4!

Continuing to build the pressure on d5. With the black knight on b6, 17.♘xd5?? is a horrible blunder due to 17...♗xd5 18.e4 ♗c4 and White has lost a piece for nothing.

17. ... ♗e7-f6

17...a5 is an ugly move to play and also, White's pressure remains unpleasant after 18.♕c2 g6 (or 18...f5?! 19.g4) 19.♗a2.

18. ♕e2-c2 g7-g6



19. a4-a5

White wants more than just a safe advantage, which could have been achieved with 19.♗a2! (by the way, to me this looks like objectively the best move here) 19...♗xc3 20.♕xc3! ♘xa4 21.♕c2 ♕d7 22.♗b3 ♘b6 23.♕xc5 and Black's d5 pawn remains a problem that is impossible to solve. Note the huge difference that the presence or absence of Black's dark-squared bishop (placed on f6, for example) makes in the assessment of these positions.

19. ... ♘b6-c4

Another defence was 19...♗xc3 20.♕xc3 (if 20.axb6, then 20...♗b4 21.♗a2 ♖e8) 20...♘c4! (20...♘d7? is not good due to 21.♗a2) 21.e4! (Black would be doing well in the endgame in case of 21.♗a2 ♕xa5 22.♕xa5 ♘xa5 23.♗xd5 ♖fb8 24.♘e5 ♗xd5 25.♖xd5 ♖xb2 26.♖xc5 ♖b5) 21...♕xa5 22.♕c1 ♔g7 23.exd5 ♕b4 24.♗a2 ♘d6 25.♘e5 and White has the better chances.

20. ♘c3xd5

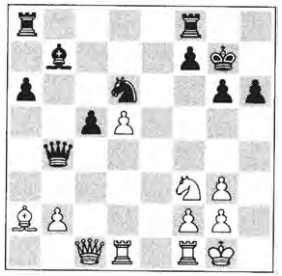
The path that White chooses looks logical, but 20.e4! may well have been better, for example:

A) In the event of 20...d4?, White is much better after 21.♘a4 ♘xa5 22.♘xc5;

B) In the event of 20...♕xa5? 21.♘xd5! (wrong is 21.exd5? because of 21...♗g7! and Black has an excellent, Grünfeld-type initiative) 21...♗xd5 22.♖xd5 ♕b4 23.e5 ♗g7 24.♗a2, due to the open a2-g8 and b1-h7 diagonals White obtains a winning advantage;

C) The prophylactic 20...♗g7? is also not good, due to 21.♘xd5 ♘xb2 22.♖d2 ♕xa5 23.♘e7+ ♔h7 24.e5 ♘c4 25.♘xg6;

D) 20...♗xc3! is best for Black: 21.♕xc3 ♕xa5 22.♕c1! ♔g7 23.exd5 ♕b4 24.♗a2 ♘d6



analysis diagram

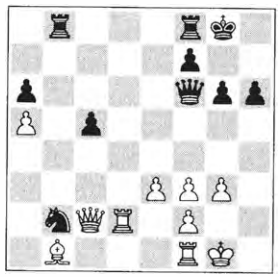
25.♘e5 and by transposition, we have reached a position discussed in a previous comment (19...♗xc3 instead of 19...♘c4).

20. ... ♘c4xb2!

Black is not afraid of having his knight almost encircled and lost. 20...♗xd5 21.e4 would be good for White.

21. ♘d5xf6+ ♕d8xf6
22. ♖d1-d2 ♗b7xf3
23. g2xf3 ♖a8-b8

23...c4?? blunders a knight due to 24.♕xb2 c3 25.♕a1!.



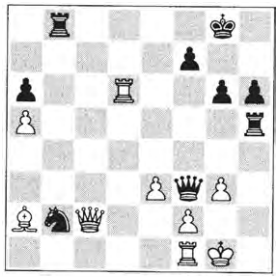
24. f3-f4

It is quite possible that Kramnik overestimated his chances related to Black's misplaced knight on b2. Very soon this knight will become a monster.

White could have taken a pawn with 24.♕xc5, and now:

A) 24...♕xf3? is bad because of 25.♕d4 and now Black is going to feel the consequences of his stranded knight on b2: 25...♖b5! 26.♗e4 (obviously not 26.♖xb2?? ♖h5 and White is mated) 26...♕g4 27.f3! ♕xg3+ 28.♖g2 ♕b8 29.♗xg6 ♖g5 30.♗e4 ♖d8 31.♗d5! and Black is lost due to the terrible position of his b2 knight;

B) Black's best response is 24...♖b5! 25.♕c2!? (White has a very slight advantage, far from enough for any realistic winning chances, in the case of 25.♕d4 ♕xd4 26.♖xd4 ♖xa5 27.♗e4) 25...♕xf3 26.♖d6! ♖fb8 (not 26...♖h5?? 27.♖xg6+) 27.♗a2 ♖h5!



analysis diagram

28.♕xg6+! ♔f8 (28...♔h8?? 29.♕f6+ ♕xf6 30.♖xf6 ♖xa5 31.♗xf7 ♔g7 32.♖f4 ♘d3 33.♖d4) 29.♕xf7+ ♕xf7 30.♗xf7 ♔xf7 31.♖xa6 and with three pawns for a knight and an exposed black king, White should be better.

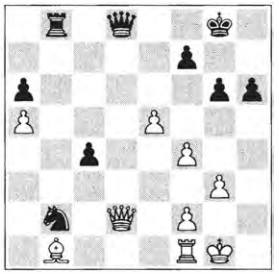
24. ... c5-c4

Now the black knight will be well supported on d3. Also, the pawn on c4 is very useful as it closes the a2-g8 diagonal.

25. e3-e4 ♖f8-d8!

It is useful for Black to exchange a pair of rooks. 25...c3? would be a losing mistake because the pawn on c3 would be difficult to defend and the a2-g8 diagonal would be re-opened for the white bishop: 26.e5 ♕c6 27.♖d6 ♕c7 28.♖c1 ♖fc8 29.♗a2 ♔g7 30.♖f6.

26. e4-e5 ♖d8xd2
27. ♕c2xd2 ♕f6-d8



28. ♕d2-e2!

White has to keep the queens on the board, in order to have attacking potential against the black king to compensate for Black's domination on the queenside. 28.♕c3? would be a blunder in view of 28...♖b3!.

28. ... ♕d8-d4!

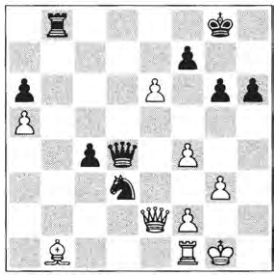
Faced with a choice between greed and centralization, Black correctly opts for the latter. 28...♕xa5 would give White a strong initiative after 29.e6 (or 29.f5) 29...♕d5 30.e7 ♕b5 31.f5 gxf5 32.♗xf5.

29. e5-e6

Also possible was 29.f5.

29. ... ♘b2-d3

An interesting possibility was 29...f5!? in order to control the light squares and limit the white bishop.



30. ♗b1-c2

White wants to bring his bishop back into play and to create motifs with ♗a4.

30.♖d1, pinning the knight, was probably better, since 30...♖d8 (or 30...♖b2 31.♗c2) 31.exf7+ (31.e7 ♖e8 32.♗xd3 cxd3 33.♖xd3 ♖xe7 34.♖xd4 ♖xe2 35.♖d6 is a draw in view of 35...♖e6) 31...♔xf7 should, due to Black's exposed king, be better for White: 32.♗a2. In order to get an efficient attack against the black king, White must get his rook and bishop, which are being dominated by the black knight at the moment, back into play.

An attack by the lone queen is not enough, for instance: 30.exf7+ ♔xf7 31.f5? gxf5! 32.♕h5+ ♔g7 33.♕xf5? ♖f8 and Black wins.

30. ... f7xe6?!

There was no need at all for Black to allow the white queen to enter. Natural and good was 30...♖e8 31.exf7+ (31.f5 ♔g7 is good for Black) 31...♔xf7 32.♕f3 ♕e4 and the position is dynamically balanced, with a draw as a likely outcome.

31. ♕e2xe6+ ♔g8-g7
32. ♗c2-a4

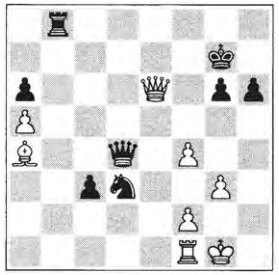
Again, attacking with the queen only is wrong: 32.f5? gxf5 33.♕xf5?? ♖f8, while 32.♕xa6 ♖b2 is likely to lead to a draw: 33.♗xd3 cxd3 34.♕e6 ♖xf2 35.♖xf2 d2 36.♕e7+ ♔g8 37.♕e8+ ♔g7.

32. ... c4-c3??

Probably in time pressure, Black wants to make sure that he is 'on time' with his counterplay. Unfortunately, White now regains light-square control and his bishop becomes a monster again.

A) 32...♘xf2?? would be a blunder after 33.♖xf2 ♕a1+ (or 33...♖b2 34.♕e5+) 34.♔g2 ♕xa4 35.♕e5+;

B) Keeping the white bishop under control with 32...♘c5! was the way to proceed. After 33.♕e7+ ♔g8 34.♗c2 (34.♗e8?! ♖b7! 35.♕h4 ♕e4 36.♕d8 ♔g7 brings White in trouble) 34...♘d3, it seems that White has nothing better than to repeat moves or enter the line with 35.♕e6+ ♔g7 36.♕xa6 ♖b2, which is also likely to lead to a draw. Now this interesting and well-played game comes to an abrupt end.



33. ♗a4-c2!!

This 'small' retreat must have been completely missed by Black. Now, the knight on d3, which was a well-defended, dominant piece only one move earlier, becomes a terrible liability. Black loses in one move from a balanced position by pushing his passed pawn one square closer to promotion, according to regular chess principles. Logic sometimes follows strange rules in chess.

33. ... ♖b8-b2

A desperate attempt at counterplay. Or 33...♖f8 34.♕xa6.

34. ♕e6-e7+ ♔g7-g8

35. ♕e7-e2!

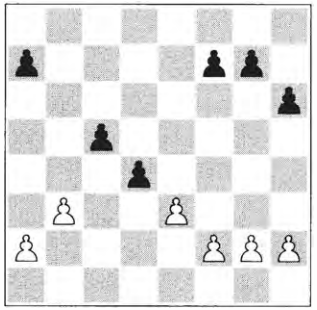
Now Black loses material.

35. ... ♘d3xf4

36. g3xf4 ♔g8-f7

37. ♖f1-d1 1-0

Structure 3.4



QO 7.10 (D58) **GAME 40**

Joel Lautier

Nigel Short

Pamplona 1999/00 (8)

1. d2-d4 e7-e6

2. ♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6

3. c2-c4 d7-d5

4. ♘b1-c3 ♗f8-e7

5. ♗c1-g5 h7-h6

6. ♗g5-h4 0-0

7. e2-e3 b7-b6

8. ♗f1-d3 ♗c8-b7

9. 0-0 ♘b8-d7

10. ♗h4-g3 c7-c5

11. ♕d1-e2 ♘f6-e4

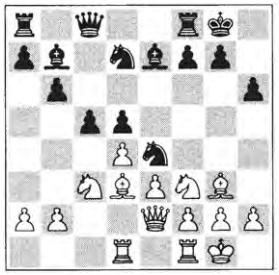
12. c4xd5 e6xd5

13. ♖a1-d1

For a number of different lines and explanations about this popular variation, see Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky (Game 28) and Kramnik-Yusupov (Game 39).

13. ... ♕d8-c8!?

If I am not mistaken, this interesting idea was invented by Short and introduced into practice in this game. Black wants to put his d7 knight on f6 and be able to recapture on c5 with his b6 pawn (which is why he moves his queen away from the d-file pin). Also, after ...♘df6 the black queen can be transferred to e6, which is one of the best squares for the queen in these positions.



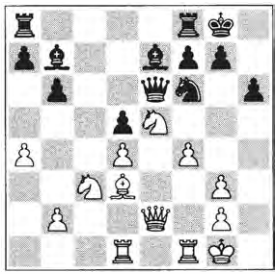
14. ♗d3-b1?!

White wants to exert pressure on the d5 pawn and set up a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal, but both these motifs will not have any practical significance in this game. White cannot try for the upper hand/symmetrical position with 14.♗xe4? dxe4 15.♘e5, since after 15...♘xe5 16.♗xe5, Black has 16...♗a6! (this is also one of the pluses of 13...♕c8) 17.♘b5 ♕e6! 18.a4 ♕b3 and White is in trouble.

Since the game move (14.♗b1) brought White nowhere, two other moves have since become the main continuations:

A) 14.a4. The idea is to slow down Black's potential queenside advance (should he ever play ...c5-c4) and also wait for Black's ...♘df6 in order to jump to e5 with the f3 knight. I doubt that, objectively, this plan can yield White any advantage, for example:

A1) 14...♘df6 15.♘e5! ♕e6 16.f4 (in case of 16.f3 ♘xg3 17.hxg3 ♗d6 18.f4, White would be half a tempo down compared to the game) 16...cxd4 17.exd4 ♘xg3 18.hxg3.



analysis diagram

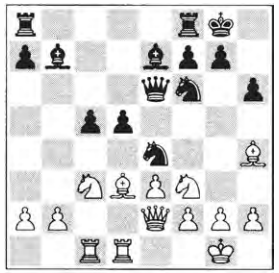
White's strategy has been successful, since the g4-g5 push will indeed be unpleasant for Black: 18...♗b4 19.g4!

♖ae8 20.g5 hxg5 21.fxg5 ♘e4 22.♗xe4 (White wants more than just an extra pawn in the endgame with heavy pieces after 22.♘xe4 dxe4 23.♗xe4 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4 ♗d6 25.♖de1 ♗xe5 26.dxe5) 22...dxe4 23.♕h5 ♗xc3 (if 23...e3?, then 24.♖f4! e2 25.♖h4 exd1♕+ 26.♘xd1 and Black is mated) 24.bxc3 e3 25.♖de1 and White soon got a winning advantage in Sasikiran-Kasimdzhanov, Skanderborg 2003.

Despite White's success in this game, 14.a4 has rarely been repeated. It was perhaps better for Black to also make a useful move, waiting with his knight transfer and keeping it on d7, where it controls the e5-square.

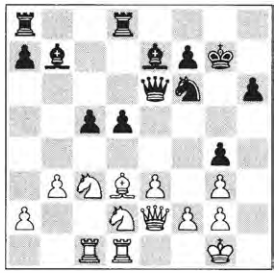
A2) In reply to 14...a6!? White still cannot play for the 'upper-hand symmetry' with 15.♗xe4?! dxe4 16.♘e5, since Black will have a good game after 16...♘xe5 17.♗xe5 ♕e6.

B) The most frequently tried move so far has been 14.♖c1 ♘df6 15.dxc5?! (the creation of hanging black pawns in the centre is not a good idea for White here. As can be seen from the present instructive example and also from our main game, Black obtains excellent piece play – the bishop pair, also a little more space, and White is very far from able to seriously target Black's pawns on c5 and d5. It was better for White to maintain the status quo in the centre and play 15.♘e5!, following up with plans similar to the above-mentioned game Sasikiran-Kasimdzhanov, with good chances to get an opening advantage) 15...bxc5 16.♖fd1 ♕e6 17.♗h4. Probably the white player thought that he was being smart and that the bishop on h4 would be annoying for Black. I have chosen to show this game because Black now demonstrates an attacking plan which can often be used in positions like this and his execution is fine, which makes this game well worth remembering.



analysis diagram

17...g5! 18.♗g3 ♖fd8 19.♘d2! (correctly forcing Black to make a decision concerning his e4 knight) 19...♘xg3 20.hxg3 g4! (fixing the white kingside and getting ready for a direct attack) 21.b3 ♔g7!.

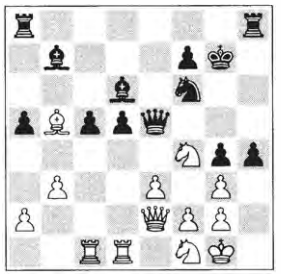


analysis diagram

It becomes clear that Black will try to open the h-file and create mate threats. White needs to find counterplay quickly: 22.♕f1 (22.♖e1, preparing e3-e4, was an option) 22...a5 23.♘e2? (White is obviously not aware of the trouble he is in and comes up with a series of useless, time-wasting moves,

while Black executes his plan of a mating attack along the h-file. It was high time for White to organize active counterplay with 23.♖e1!, threatening e3-e4, and if 23...♘e4, then 24.♘dxe4 dxe4 25.♗c4 ♕e5 26.♖ed1 with approximate equality) 23...♕e5 24.♗b5 h5 25.♘f4 ♖h8!.

Now Black's plan has been executed. The coming ...h5-h4 cannot be stopped. White was now definitely fully aware of his problems and he shuffles his knight in order to try and prevent immediate annihilation – without success: 26.♕e2 h4 27.♘f1 ♗d6



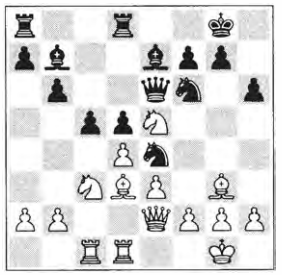
analysis diagram

28.♗d3? (in a difficult position, this new tempo loss definitely doesn't help. The counterplay attempt with 28.♗d7! ♕g5 29.♕b5 had to be considered) 28...♕g5 29.♕d2 ♕h6 30.e4 (White's first active move is far too late) 30...hxg3 31.fxg3 c4! 32.♗b1 ♖ae8 33.♘e3 ♗c5 and White resigned in Sargissian-Halkias, Antalya Ech 2004.

The way Sargissian suffered this terrible defeat in this game is not that uncommon for white players in such positions. Rather often, the side playing against hanging pawns in the centre, instead of concentrating on the e3-e4 pawn break or straight pressure on Black's c5 or d5 pawns (mostly c5) makes the mistake of believing that a senseless shuffling of pieces will for some reason make one of Black's hanging pawns weak by itself, and will force Black onto the defensive. In the meantime, Black will naturally use his space advantage to either prepare a successful ...d5-d4 break – as in our main game Lautier-Short – or – as in Halkias's case – a kingside attack.

Black can also, for the time being, keep his knight on d7 in order to prevent White's planned ♘f3-e5 jump: 14...♘xg3 15.hxg3 ♖e8 16.♖fd1 c4 (another option is to keep the tension a little longer with 16...♘f6 17.♘e5 ♗d6, since after 18.f4, compared to the game Sasikiran-Kasimdzhanov, the white rook is misplaced on d1 and it will cost White time to bring it back to f1) 17.♗b1 ♘f6 18.♘e5 ♗d6 19.f4 a6 20.g4 b5 with a complicated game in Riazantsev-Onischuk, Sochi 2008.

Playing a useful developing move and keeping all options open with 14...♖d8 is the most flexible for Black: 15.♖fd1 ♘df6 16.♘e5 ♕e6.



analysis diagram

Since White's f1 rook has moved to d1 and is misplaced for supporting f2-f4, White now opts for a different plan: 17.♗h4 ♖ac8 18.f3 cxd4 19.exd4

♘xc3 20.♖xc3 ♖xc3 21.bxc3 ♘d7! (Black keeps exchanging pieces and with limited material left, it will be difficult for White to take advantage of his better-placed light-squared bishop and create activity on the kingside) 22.♗xe7 ♕xe7

analysis diagram

23.♘xd7 (this leads to an immediate draw. In order to keep some life in the position and to show aspirations, White had to continue with 23.f4) 23...♖xd7 24.♖e1 ♕xe2 25.♖xe2 ♔f8 26.♖e3 ♖e7 27.♔f2 ♖xe3 28.♔xe3 ♔e7 draw, Bacrot-Ivanchuk, Odessa ACP Grand Prix 2007.

14. ... ♘d7-f6

15. ♕e2-c2 ♖f8-e8

Black has a number of useful moves and he plays them correctly, keeping the tension in the centre.

16. ♗g3-e5?

This move does not fit in any plan and the bishop will only be clumsy on e5. I am not fond of the plan with ♗b1/♕c2 and I think that White has to be careful not to land in a worse position here.

Probably some central exchanges were needed: 16.dxc5 bxc5 17.♘xe4! ♘xe4?! (the attempt to keep his central pawns connected may bring Black into trouble. The game is about equal after 17...dxe4 18.♘e5 ♕e6) 18.♘d2! f5 19.♘xe4 fxe4 20.f3! ♗g5 21.fxe4 ♗xe3+ 22.♗f2 ♗xf2+ 23.♕xf2 d4 (23...dxe4?? is a huge blunder due to 24.♕f7+ ♔h8 25.♖d7) 24.b4! ♗a6 (24...cxb4?? is a terrible blunder due to 25.♕f7+ ♔h8 26.♖c1 ♕b8 27.♖c7) 25.♖fe1 and White has some initiative, for example: 25...cxb4 26.♕xd4 ♕c3 27.♕d5+ ♔h8 28.♕d6 ♗b7 29.e5.

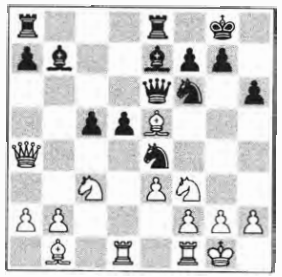
16. ... ♕c8-e6

The queen arrives at its natural position and underlines the clumsiness of the bishop on e5.

17. d4xc5 b6xc5

A position with parallel hanging pawns in the centre has been reached, where it is difficult for White to exert any pressure on Black's pawns on d5 and c5, while it is rather easy for Black to keep improving his pieces. It is probably fair to say that Black is slightly better here.

18. ♕c2-a4



18. ... ♘e4-g5!

Conquering the bishop pair.

19. ♘f3xg5 ♕e6xe5

20. ♘g5-f3 ♕e5-e6

21. ♖f1-e1 ♗e7-f8

Black's c5 and d5 pawns are well-defended and his pieces are harmoniously placed, while White has to worry about the ...d5-d4 pawn break. Also, Black has enough time to prepare this break and execute it at a favourable moment, since White has no meaningful counterplay.

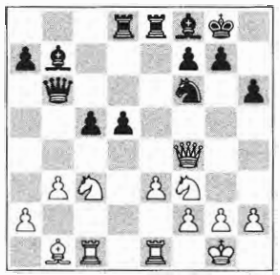
22. ♕a4-f4 ♕e6-b6

Also interesting was to try and lock out the white queen on f4 with 22...♘e4!?, and if 23.♘xe4 (or 23.♕c7 ♖ab8) 23...dxe4 24.♘d2 ♗d6 (24...c4 25.♕c7 ♗d5 is also better for Black) 25.♕h4 ♖ad8 26.b3 ♗c7 27.♘c4 ♗d5 28.♖c1 f5 and Black is better. The white bishop on b1 is rather passive, while the queen is definitely misplaced on h4.

23. b2-b3 ♖a8-d8

Black focuses on preparing the ...d5-d4 break. A standard plan like 23...♗d6 24.♕h4 a5 is also good for Black.

24. ♖d1-c1



24. ... d5-d4!

25. e3xd4 ♖e8xe1+

26. ♖c1xe1 c5xd4

27. ♘c3-a4!

Sadly, the knight has to jump to the edge of the board. 27.♘e4? is not good due to 27...♗xe4 28.♗xe4 d3 – the black d-pawn is strong, while White's pieces are very badly placed; the ♗e4 and ♕f4 in particular – 29.♖d1 (even worse is 29.♕f5? after the simple 29...g6 30.♕f4 ♔g7 and all Black's problems remain) 29...♕b4 30.♘d2 ♖d4 31.a3 (31.f3? loses to 31...♘d5 32.♕h4 ♘e3) 31...♕c3 and Black cannot prevent material loss, for instance: 32.♕e3 ♘xe4 33.♘xe4 ♕xb3 etc.

27. ... ♕b6-c6

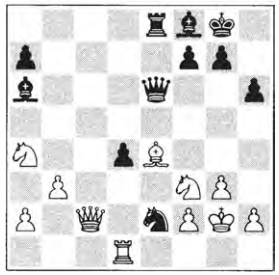
28. ♖e1-c1

28. ... ♕c6-b5!?

Setting a trap that White falls into. Better was the intermediary 28...♘d5!, allowing Black to improve his queen: 29.♕d2 (29.♖xc6? is a blunder which loses quickly after 29...♘xf4 30.♖c7 (or 30.♖c4 ♗d5!) 30...♗xf3 31.gxf3 d3 32.♘b2 d2 33.♗c2 ♖e8 34.h3 ♖e1+ 35.♔h2 ♘d3! 36.♘xd3 ♗d6+) 29...♕f6 30.♗e4! (30.♕xd4?? blunders a piece after 30...♕xd4 31.♘xd4 ♘f4) 30...♗a6 31.♖d1 (probably a better, or at least a more practical defence is to eliminate the black knight with 31.♗xd5! and after 31...♖xd5 play 32.b4, with ♘c5 to follow) 31...♘f4 and, with his knight alive, Black has plenty of annoying tactics.

There follows: 32.g3 (32.♖e1? is wrong due to 32...d3, with ♘e2 to fol-

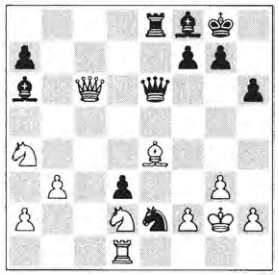
low) 32...♘e2+ 33.♔g2 ♖e8 34.♕c2! (White's bishop has to stay on the h1-a8 diagonal. A blunder is 34.♗d3? due to 34...♘c3 35.♘xc3 (or 35.♖e1? ♗b7; or 35.♗xa6 ♘xd1 36.♗b5 ♖b8) 35...dxc3 36.♕c2 ♗b7) 34...♕e6.



analysis diagram

A) Now White's best defence is 35.♗h7+! ♔h8 36.♗f5! ♕d5 37.♗d3 and it seems as if he survives, for example: 37...♘f4+ 38.gxf4 ♗b7 39.♗e2 ♕e6 40.f5! ♕xe2 41.♕xe2 ♖xe2 42.♖xd4 ♖xa2 43.♖d8 ♔g8 44.♘c5 ♗c6 45.♖c8! ♖c2 46.♖xc6 ♖xc5 47.♖xc5 ♗xc5 48.♘e5.

B) 35.♘d2? is worse: 35...d3 (simple and strong is also 35...♗b5!, which prevents White's ♕c6 and leaves Black with a big advantage) 36.♕c6 (36.♗xd3?? is wrong due to the simple 36...♘f4+ 37.gxf4 ♕g4+ 38.♔h1 ♗xd3) and now:

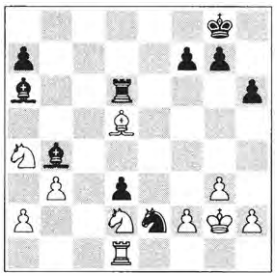


analysis diagram

Strongest is 36...♘f4+! 37.♔g1 ♗b4! 38.♕xe6 ♘xe6.

Now the queens have been swapped, but the endgame is an improved version for Black due to the knight check. His d-pawn is strong, his pieces are perfectly coordinated and the position is very difficult for White, for example: 39.♘c4 ♗xc4 40.bxc4 d2 41.a3 ♗a5, with ...♘d4 to follow, and Black should win.

If Black plays 36...♗b4?! immediately, after 37.♕xe6 ♖xe6 White has good saving chances: 38.♗d5 (another option is 38.f3 ♗b5 39.♘b1! and if 39...♗xa4 40.bxa4 d2, White has 41.♘xd2! ♖d6 42.♖b1 ♖xd2 43.♖xb4 f5 44.♖b8+ ♔f7 45.♗b7, with good drawing chances) 38...♖d6 and now:

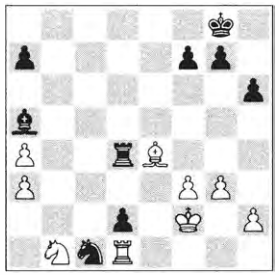


analysis diagram

B1) Best is 39.♗c4! ♗b7+ 40.f3 ♘d4 41.♘e4! (41.♗xd3?! does not solve the problems after 41...g6! (to prevent the discovered check ♗h7+) 42.♔f2 ♗xd2 43.♖xd2 ♘xf3) 41...d2 42.♔f2 ♗xe4 43.fxe4 and White has good chances to hold;

B2) 39.♗e4? proves to be a decisive mistake: after 39...♖d4 40.f3 ♗b5! the knight on a4 is an important defender, which controls the c3-square:

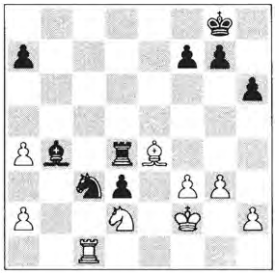
B21) Perhaps 41.♘b1 can be considered, though White's position is rather passive and probably lost, since after 41...♗xa4 42.bxa4 d2 43.♔f2 ♘c1 (43...♘c3 44.♘xc3 ♗xc3 45.♔e2) 44.a3 ♗a5



analysis diagram

and now the only attempt at counterplay, 45.♔e3, loses to 45...♗b6 46.♗c2 (46.♖xd2?? is a blunder on account of 46...♖d3+ 47.♔f4 ♗e3+) 46...♖d8+ 47.♔e4 ♗a5 48.♔e3 g6! 49.♘xd2? ♗b6+ 50.♔e4 (or 50.♔f4 ♘e2+ 51.♔g4 ♘c3) 50...f5+ 51.♔e5 ♔f7 52.♘c4 ♗c7+ 53.♘d6+ ♖xd6 54.♖xd6 ♔e7;

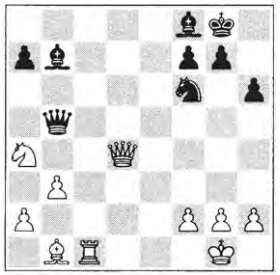
B22) 41.♔f2 ♗xa4 42.bxa4 ♘c3 43.♖c1



43...♘xe4+! 44.♘xe4 f5! 45.♔e3 ♖d5 and Black wins. An unexpected dénouement. The white knight is caught in the middle of the board: 46.♘d2 (or 46.♘f2) 46...♗c5+ 47.♔f4 g5 mate.

29. ♘f3xd4? ♖d8xd4

30. ♕f4xd4



30. ... ♕b5-g5!

And White resigned.

Chapter 4

Pawn Majority in the Centre

Introduction

In this chapter I have systematized the structures and games slightly differently compared to the previous three chapters, since the various thematic ideas for both sides often must be considered and finally chosen, depending on the peculiarities of the position.

Therefore, 7 structures are given on the following pages, related to the thematic ideas. Five commented games then follow, and often, in one game or its comments, we encounter different thematic ideas.

The reader may find that I am perhaps a little biased, favouring the side playing with the pawn majority. This opinion could be correct, given the fact that I am a 1.d4 player, and throughout my career I have mostly played on the side with the pawn majority in the centre.

For a club player, apart from the fact that he will enhance his understanding of thematic ideas, the five selected games also offer an excellent guide to the opening variations featured, and if you take time to study the material seriously, the knowledge you acquire can be very valuable in tournament play.

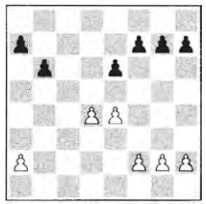
Game 41 (Spassky-Petrosian) is a guide to one of the main lines of the Semi-Tarrasch, featuring classic and contemporary games.

Game 44 (Sokolov-Howell) explains an interesting sideline of the Grünfeld Indian and includes some previously unpublished analysis of this game by the author.

The games 42 (Kasparov-Najdorf), 43 (Galliamova-Tiviakov) and 45 (Sokolov--Polgar) all feature the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian, a variation that the young Kasparov built a considerable part of his success on almost 30 years ago. This particular variation has also served me very well. In the comments to these games I give the relevant strategic plans, important games, personal opinions and analyses.

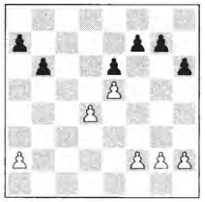
Structure 4.1 is a regular starting position with a pawn majority in the centre.

4.1



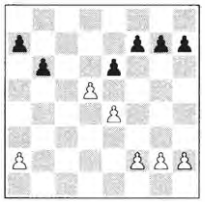
Structure 4.2 relates to White's plan to build a kingside attack with e4-e5, explained in the comments to Game 41 (Spassky-Petrosian), and in the comments to 11...♘d7 (instead of the game move 11...♘c6) – the games Lobron-C.Hansen and Radjabov-Van Wely in particular.

4.2



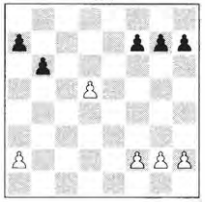
Structure 4.3 relates to the regular central pawn push d4-d5 that White often executes in these positions (and Black mostly takes ...e6xd5).

4.3



Structure 4.4 relates to the white plan to push d4-d5 and then create a strong passed d-pawn – see Game 41 (Spassky-Petrosian).

4.4

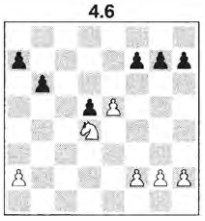


Structure 4.5 relates to the white plan of sacrificing his d-pawn, and, after d4-d5 e6xd5, proceeding with e4-e5 to build a kingside attack on the open diagonals a1-h8, b1-h7 and c1-h6, a plan which is nicely illustrated in Game 43 (Galliamova-Tiviakov). The other aspect of this pawn sacrifice is that White gets a beautiful attacking outpost for his knight on d4, as featured in Games 42 (Kasparov-Najdorf), 44 (Sokolov-Howell) and 45 (Sokolov-Polgar).

4.5

Structure 4.6 relates to a double pawn sacrifice. After already sacrificing his d-pawn (as mentioned under Structure 4.5; d4-d5 e6xd5 and White proceeds with e4-e5) White proceeds with ♘f3-d4, sacrificing his e5 pawn in order to win some extra time and launch an attack against the black king. In Game 44 (Sokolov-Howell, a Grünfeld Indian Defence), Black's pawns were on g6 and f5 and White exchanged his knight for Black's fianchettoed

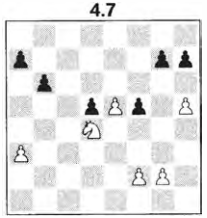
4.6



dark-squared bishop, opening up Black's position and creating a strong attack along the a1-h8 diagonal.
Game 42 (Kasparov-Najdorf) is a more classic example. Kasparov's victory was swift, but the analyses given show that Black had plenty of defensive resources.

Structure 4.7 shows a nice attacking example from my own practice – in fact, this was one of the best games I have ever played. White makes the standard d4-d5 pawn sacrifice, and after ...e6xd5 proceeds with e4-e5, with a very strong knight on d4, making maximal use of the created outpost, Black's f-pawn being on f5 here.

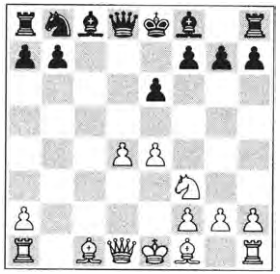
4.7



TD 2.9 (D41) **GAME 41**

Boris Spassky
Tigran V Petrosian
Moscow World Championship 1969 (5)

1.	**c2-c4**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**♘b1-c3**	**e7-e6**
3.	**♘g1-f3**	**d7-d5**
4.	**d2-d4**	**c7-c5**
5.	**c4xd5**	**♘f6xd5**
6.	**e2-e4**	**♘d5xc3**
7.	**b2xc3**	**c5xd4**
8.	**c3xd4**	



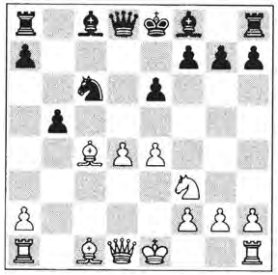
One of the main positions of the Semi-Tarrasch, and a perfect one for the study of pawn majorities in the centre.

8. ... ♗f8-b4+

The pawn structure we have here is similar to the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian, which we will see in the games Kasparov-Najdorf, Galliamova-Tiviakov and Sokolov-Polgar further on in this chapter.

Compared to that variation, Black has a slightly more convenient situation here, since he can immediately force the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. Given the fact that White has considerably more space, it is generally quite useful for Black to exchange his dark-squared bishop for its white counterpart, in order to make it easier for himself to manoeuvre his pieces, within the limited space available to him.

The other option for Black is to slightly delay the bishops swap and make use of a tactical element to aim for quicker development, since after 8...♘c6 9.♗c4 Black has the tempo move 9...b5. Practice has shown that, with correct play by White, it is questionable whether Black, who is slightly underdeveloped, is ready for such an active undertaking. The following game is a good example.



analysis diagram

A) 10.♗d3 may look active, but promises nothing after 10...♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12.♕xd2 a6 13.a4 0-0! 14.♕c3 (or 14.axb5 ♘xd4) 14...♗b7 15.axb5 axb5 16.0-0 (the b5 pawn is taboo, since after both 16.♗xb5? ♖xa1+ 17.♕xa1 ♕b6 and 16.♖xa8 ♕xa8 17.♗xb5? ♘a7, Black regains his pawn, with a better game) 16...♕b6 17.♖ab1 b4 and now:

A1) 18.♕d2 leads to a forced draw: 18...♘xd4 19.♘xd4 ♕xd4 20.♖xb4 ♕d7 and the draw was soon agreed in the 9th match game Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik 1972. Fischer used the Semi-Tarrasch in a number of important games. He believed in Black's counterplay;

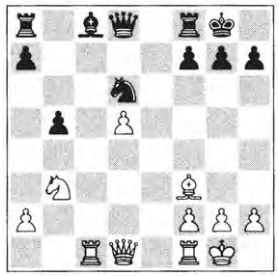
A2) The active attempt 18.d5 also leads to a peaceful outcome after

18...exd5 19.exd5 bxc3 (getting 'ambitious' with 19...♕a5? is a blunder due to 20.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 21.♕c2+ with dxc6 to follow, and Black will be a pawn down – in the best-case scenario for him) 20.♖xb6 ♘a5 21.d6 ♗xf3 22.gxf3 ♖ac8 23.♖c1 ♘c4.

B) 10.♗e2! (the bishop goes back to e2 in order for White to be ready for the d4-d5 push) 10...♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♕a5 (one of the problems of the early ...b7-b5 is that, after the initial tempo gain, Black has to lose time defending his b5 pawn. Following in Fischer's footsteps with 11...♗xd2+ 12.♕xd2 a6 would not work here, since White now has 13.d5) 12.d5! (this typical pawn thrust is almost by definition unpleasant for Black in these structures) 12...exd5 13.exd5 ♘e7 14.0-0 ♗xd2 15.♘xd2 0-0 16.♘b3 ♕d8.

B1) Now White can aim for more than a small advantage with 17.♗xb5 ♗b7 18.d6 ♘f5 (18...♘g6!? is an option) 19.♘c5 (19.d7? ♕g5) 19...♘xd6 20.♘xb7 ♘xb7;

B2) 17.♗f3 ♘f5 (since Nimzowitsch, the knight is known to be the best passed pawn blocker, so the black knight goes to d6) 18.♖c1 ♘d6.



analysis diagram

Sadly for Black, pawns cannot go back. If he had his b-pawn on b7 instead of b5, he would be equal at least. Now, with the c6-square weak, it is a different story. White is better due to the fact that Black cannot prevent his knight from entering on c6.

19.♕d4 ♕b6 20.♕f4 ♗d7 21.♘d4 ♖fe8 22.♘c6 ♘c4 23.♖fe1 and due to the excellently-placed knight on c6, White had a clear advantage in Yusupov-Ribli, Montpellier Candidates' 1985.

9. ♗c1-d2 ♗b4xd2+
10. ♕d1xd2 0-0
11. ♗f1-c4

Since this is a one of the typical positions with a pawn majority in the centre, this is a good moment to take stock and try to explain some general plans.

Black is, per definition, going to develop his bishop to b7, where it will be actively placed, hitting the white centre. Black's a8 rook will be developed to c8, where normally White leaves it unopposed, since rook exchanges are generally good for Black.

The black knight is sometimes – as in this game – developed to c6 in order to hit on White's d4 pawn and to have manoeuvres like ...♘c6-a5 or ...♘c6-e7; or to d7 in order not to step into a d4-d5 tempo.

Queen swaps and other types of exchanges are generally good for Black here.

White is supposed to organize his forces behind a mighty pawn centre and either execute the d4-d5 thrust in order to get a passed pawn, or sacrifice the d4 pawn in order, after d4-d5 e6xd5, to push e4-e5, obtain an outpost on d4 for his f3 knight and get attacking prospects on the black king.

If the black knight is developed to d7, White also has a possibility to leave his

pawn on d4 and to push e4-e5 in order to limit this d7 knight and seize some extra space to organize an attack on the kingside. The fact that White has surrendered the central d5-square is mostly less relevant than it may seem.

White should generally try to avoid exchanges and keep as many pieces on the board as possible.

These are the general plans in the positions with a pawn majority in the centre. They also apply, as we shall see, to the Petrosian Variation of the Queen's Indian, where both sides have dark-squared bishops on the board. I shall give a sufficient number of top-class practical examples to explore the above-mentioned plans.

11. ... ♘b8-c6

Black can also first develop his bishop to b7, and later decide where to put his knight, by opting for 11...b6?!. This move, however, has the drawback that it allows the immediate 12.d5! (one of the reasons behind 11.♗c4). White seizes a lot of space and has the better chances after 12...♗a6! (the c4 bishop has to be exchanged) 13.♗xa6 ♘xa6 14.d6! ♘c5 15.e5, as in Kortchnoi-Mecking, Hastings 1971/72.

So it seems that due to the possibility of d4-d5, it is better for Black to first develop his knight, and modern theory shares this view.

11...♘d7 is, as mentioned, another main alternative for Black here. Now the vast majority of games have continued with the almost compulsory 12.0-0 b6 13.♖fe1 ♗b7 14.♖ad1.

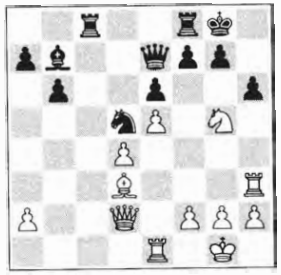
A) White has a rather interesting plan in 14.♖e3!?. As far as I know, this move has been played only once at top level, but it probably deserves more attention. White wants to execute the aforementioned e4-e5 plan, surrendering the d5-square and obtaining a kingside attack in return. Let's see how this worked out in practice:

A1) 14...♖c8 15.♗d3 (in the plans with e4-e5, this bishop is needed on the b1-h7 diagonal) 15...♕c7 16.♖ae1 ♘f6?!. Playing into White's hands. Better was 16...♖fd8. Now White can nicely execute his plan:

analysis diagram

17.e5! ♘d5 18.♘g5 h6? (a crucial mistake. Black needed strong nerves and had to go for 18...♘xe3! 19.♗xh7+ ♔h8 20.♕xe3 g6 (20...♕c3? is bad due to the simple 21.♗d3) 21.♗xg6 (it could be that White has something better here) 21...fxg6 22.♘xe6. White would have three pawns for a piece, but his attack runs out of steam and the

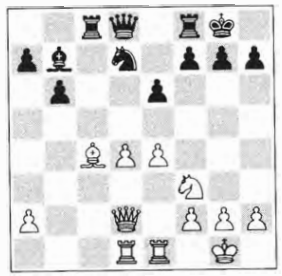
black bishop is strong. Moreover, Black has two pawns versus one on the queenside, which offers him winning chances if the white attack is stopped. The position is very unclear) 19.♖h3! ♕e7



analysis diagram

20.♘h7! ♖c7 (if 20...♖fd8, 21.♖xh6! gxh6 22.♕xh6 wins) 21.♘xf8 – White was a clear exchange up and went on to win in Lobron-Cu. Hansen, Wijk aan Zee 1993. As we have seen, Black's 'beautiful' knight on d5 was rather irrelevant in the whole story.

A2) 14...♖c8.



analysis diagram

Now White has to decide on an attacking plan to proceed with.

A21) White can retreat his bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal and play for e4-e5, attacking on the kingside, similar to Lobron-Cu.Hansen, continuing with 15.♗d3. As we are about to see, the surrender of the d5-square (which is part of the plan) did not play any significant role in this game either: 15...h6 16.♗b1 ♖e8 17.♖e3 (as in Lobron-Hansen, the rook transfer via the third rank is an essential part of the plan) 17...♕c7

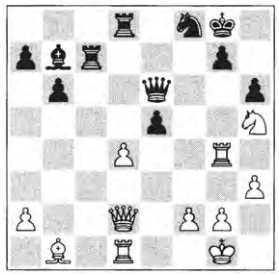
analysis diagram

18.e5!. At first sight it may look a little surprising that White develops a strong kingside attack here. After all, the diagonal of the black bishop is now open, the d5-square is firmly under black control – one might even argue that White is effectively a pawn down –, any kind of ending would be more or less winning for Black, and White still does not have any threats for the moment.

Black's problems, on the other hand, are that his b7 bishop indeed looks wonderful, but does not create any threats at the moment; his knight on d7 and, later, f8 is passive; it is difficult to create counterplay, Black's forces are cut off from the defence of the kingside, and therefore Black will be forced to play ...f7-f5 at some stage, which will make his e6 pawn weak after exf6. Also, for Black it is difficult –

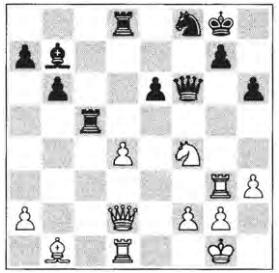
practically almost impossible – to exchange any pieces.

18...♘f8 19.♘e1! (the white knight goes via e1, d3 and f4 to its perfect attacking post on h5) 19...♕e7 20.♖g3 ♕h4 21.h3! (White threatens with ♖g4, followed by the execution of the knight transfer ♘d3-f4-h5. Then, the only black piece defending the king will be his f8 knight, so Black will be forced to involve other pieces in the defence of his king by playing ...f7-f5. As said, this creates a weakness on e6 and still doesn't solve the problems on his kingside) 21...f5! 22.exf6 ♕xf6 23.♘d3 ♖ed8 24.♘f4 (the knight continues its journey to the desired square) 24...♖c5 (this defence will not work, but the position was already difficult for Black. If 24...♖c7, 25.♖g4! (25.♘h5? is a mistake due to 25...♕h4 and now 26.♕xh6?? is a horrible blunder because of 26...♕xg3 27.♘f6+ ♔f7) 25...e5 26.♘h5 ♕e6



analysis diagram

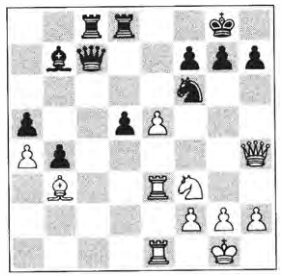
27.♗c2! (time to move the bishop to the a2-g8 diagonal) 27...♔h8 (27...♖xd4?? is a blunder in view of 28.♖xd4 exd4 29.♗b3 ♗d5 30.♘f4) 28.♗b3 ♕c6 29.d5 and White is clearly better)



analysis diagram

25.d5! (cutting off Black's defence of the h5-square) 25...g5 (the kind of move that Black was definitely not happy to play) 26.h4! ♖c4 27.♘h5 ♕e5 28.hxg5 ♖xd5 29.♘f6+ and Black resigned in Radjabov-Van Wely, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005. It is good to notice that Van Wely suffered a relatively straightforward loss without making any obvious mistake. The attacking plan demonstrated by Radjabov (and also seen in Lobron-Hansen) is per definition more dangerous than it may seem, while the importance of the control of the d5-square is less significant than it looks.

A22) 15.♗b3 (aiming for a d4-d5 push) 15...♘f6 (the featured game was played in 1938. The text is definitely logical and OK, but modern theory likes the f6-square to be kept for the black queen; thus, in one of his games Ivanchuk played 15...♕f6 16.h3 ♖fd8) 16.♕f4 ♕c7 17.♕h4 ♖fd8 18.♖e3 b5 19.♖de1 a5 20.a4 b4 (20...bxa4 was also possible. White now uses one of the well-known standard plans:) 21.d5!? (it should be noted that Black generally continues to improve his position, whereas White will sooner or later be forced to take a decision in the centre, choosing one of the above-mentioned plans with his central pawns) 21...exd5 22.e5 (this type of d-pawn sacrifice is standard here and will be seen in many games in this chapter)



analysis diagram

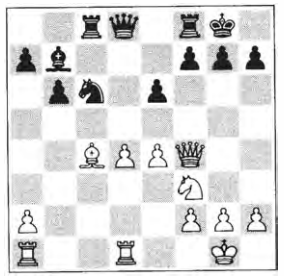
22...♘d7? (better was 22...♘e4!, when the white attack may look dangerous, but Black can successfully fight it off: 23.♖xe4 (or 23.e6 ♖f8! (not 23...fxe6? due to 24.♖xe4 dxe4 25.♘g5) 24.exf7+ ♔h8!) 23...dxe4 24.♘g5 h6! (wrong is 24...♕c3? due to 25.♗xf7+ ♔f8 26.♖f1) 25.♗xf7+ (25.♘xf7? loses to 25...♗d5) 25...♔h8 and Black is better, for example: 26.♗e6 ♖f8 27.♗xc8 ♖xc8 28.e6 b3!) 23.♘g5 (23.♘d4 would have been a typical follow-up, according to the positional rules of the standard plan with the d-pawn sacrifice. After Black takes exd5 and White proceeds with e4-e5, he will get an excellent outpost for his knight on d4) 23...♘f8? (a crucial mistake. Good nerves were needed, and Black had to opt for 23...h6! 24.e6 hxg5 25.exf7+ ♔xf7 26.♖e7+ ♔g6! 27.♖xg7+ (27.♖1e6+?? loses to 27...♘f6) 27...♔xg7 28.♕xg5+ ♔h8 29.♕h6+ and White has to give perpetual check) 24.♘xh7! ♘xh7 25.♖h3 and White soon won in Keres-Fine, Ostend 1938.

So I think, also for the sake of getting to know some theoretical aspects of this variation, that it is fair to say that 15.♗d3, as played in Radjabov-Van Wely, is probably more dangerous for Black.

12. 0-0 b7-b6

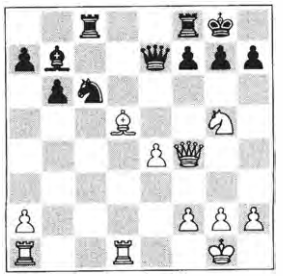
13. ♖a1-d1

It took white players some time to reach the conclusion that the rooks should be put on d1 and e1 here. The 18th World Championship match game Alekhine-Euwe (1937) continued 13.♖fd1 ♗b7 14.♕f4 ♖c8 (nowadays, 14...♕f6! would have been considered a standard response)



analysis diagram

15.d5! exd5 16.♗xd5 ♕e7 17.♘g5



analysis diagram

17...♘e5! 18.♗xb7 ♘g6 19.♕f5 ♕xb7 20.♖d7 ♕a6 (Black should be

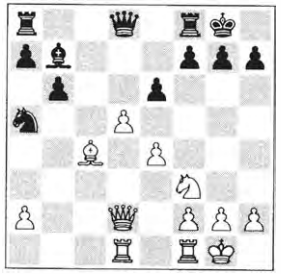
able to hold after 20...♖c7 21.♖ad1 ♖xd7 22.♖xd7 ♕a6 23.h4 ♕xa2 24.♔h2 (or 24.h5 ♕a1+ 25.♔h2 ♕e5+) 24...h6 25.h5 hxg5 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.♕e5 ♖f7 28.♕e8+ ♖f8 29.♕xg6 ♖f7) 21.h4 (if 21.♖xf7, Black defends with 21...♕xa2! – with a white rook on f1 instead of a1, such tricks are never possible – 22.♖xf8+ ♘xf8) 21...♖c5 with a dynamic balance.

13. ... ♗c8-b7

14. ♖f1-e1

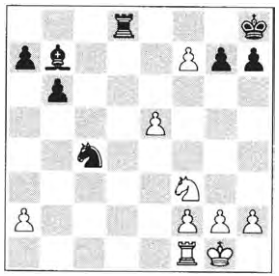
White develops his last piece before taking action with his central pawns. In some lines, leaving out 14.♖fe1 ♖c8 gives White some advantages; therefore, it is also possible to start with the immediate 14.d5!? and now:

A) In the case of 14...♘a5, the absence of the moves 14.♖fe1 ♖c8 would indeed give White an extra possibility:



analysis diagram

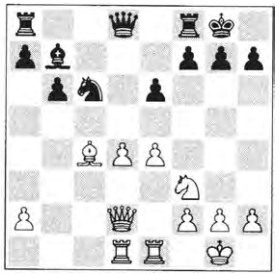
15.dxe6! (the standard idea 15.♗d3 exd5 16.e5 was another option) 15...♘xc4 (White remains a pawn up in case of 15...♕xd2? 16.exf7+ ♔h8 17.♘xd2) 16.exf7+ ♔h8 (White regains the sacrificed piece, remaining a pawn up after 16...♔xf7? 17.♕f4+ ♕f6 18.♕c7+) 17.♕xd8 ♖axd8 18.♖xd8 ♖xd8 19.e5.



analysis diagram

White's passed pawns are very strong. 19...♖c8!! (the only move to stay in the game. The idea is to move the rook away from the e6-e7 tempo. If 19...♗xf3??, 20.e6 and White promotes; or 19...♗d5?? 20.♖d1; while 19...♗c8 loses to 20.♖e1! g6 21.♘g5 ♘xe5 22.f4) 20.e6 (20.♖d1 is a draw after 20...♗xf3! 21.e6 ♘e5 22.gxf3 ♘xf7 23.exf7 g6) 20...♗d5 21.♘g5 ♘d6 22.♖d1 ♗xe6 (22...♗xa2? loses to 23.h4) 23.♘xe6 ♘xf7 24.h3 with ♖d7 to follow, and Black has a difficult life ahead of him.

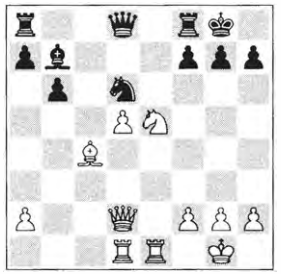
B) Black should continue with 14...exd5! 15.♗xd5 ♕e7 and in this position, the inclusion of 14.♖fe1 ♖c8 would definitely have favoured White, since a rook on e1 would have been very useful here.



14. ... ♖a8-c8

The idea behind the text is obvious. Black plays a useful developing move, postponing the decision as to where to jump with his knight: e7 or a5. Let's see what happens if Black jumps with his knight immediately.

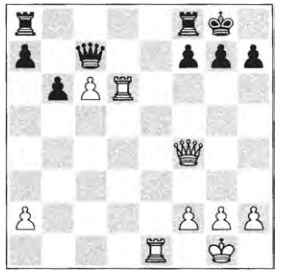
A) The deficiencies of 14...♘e7 were excellently shown in Petrosian-Kortchnoi, 6th Candidates' match game, Il Ciocco 1977: 15.d5! (White has developed all his pieces and it is time for action) 15...exd5 16.exd5 ♘f5 (the knight heads for d6 to block the advance of White's passed d-pawn, as seen in the above-mentioned comments on 8...♗b4 in Yusupov-Ribli) 17.♘e5! (Black's problem is the weakness of the c6-square, as in Yusupov-Ribli) 17...♘d6 (otherwise 18.d6)



analysis diagram

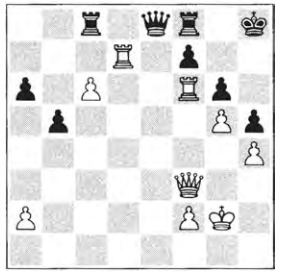
18.♘c6! ♗xc6 (18...♘xc4? is bad due to 19.♘xd8 ♘xd2 20.♘xb7 ♖ab8 21.♖e7 ♘e4 22.d6 and White has a winning endgame) 19.dxc6 ♘xc4 20.♕f4 (the point behind 18.♘c6; White regains material and ends up with a well-defended passed pawn on c6) 20...♘d6 21.♖xd6 ♕c7.

It is obvious that White is better. However, it is also very obvious that it is far from easy to convert this advantage into a full point. Petrosian's execution is highly instructive and a pleasure to watch:



analysis diagram

22.g3 h6 23.♕e5! ♖ac8 24.♕d5 (the queen is placed in a dominant position) 24...♔h7 25.♖e4 ♔g8 (Black is obviously doomed to passivity, but how does White improve?) 26.♔g2 a6 27.h4 b5 28.g4! ♔h7 29.♖e2 ♔h8 30.g5 h5 31.♖d2 ♖fe8 32.♕f3! g6 33.♖2d5! (the threat is 34.♖d7) 33...♖f8 34.♖f6! (another rook enters on d7) 34...♕e7 35.♖d7 ♕e8

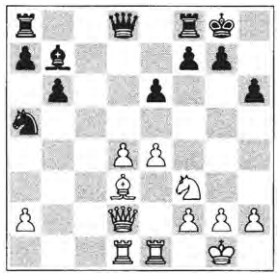


analysis diagram

36.♖xg6! (the relation between Petrosian and Kortchnoi was known to be extremely bad; still, sometimes it is better to resign and, among other things, not to give your hated opponent the pleasure of mating you) 36...♕e5 37.♕xh5 mate. Probably the only game

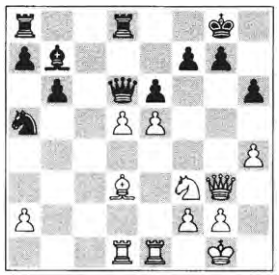
in the history of the Candidates' matches that ended with an actual mate!

B) 14...♘a5 is the other knight jump, which most of the time simply transposes to 14..♖c8 15.d5 ♘a5 lines: 15.♗d3 h6 (this move, always useful in general, is the independent idea behind 14...♘a5; 15..♖c8 16.d5, which is played in most cases, is indeed a simple transposition)



analysis diagram

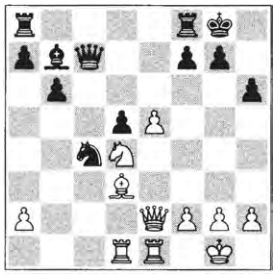
B1) The attempt to improve the position further and then aim for the d4-d5 thrust does not bring success, because Black organizes his forces as well: 16.♕f4 ♕f6 17.♕g3 ♕e7 18.h4 ♖fd8 19.d5 ♕d6! 20.e5



analysis diagram

20...♕xd5 21.♗h7+ ♔xh7 22.♖xd5 ♖xd5 and Black had a good game in P.Nikolic-Ruban, Groningen PCA 1993;

B2) 16.d5! (one of the main strategic ideas is executed again) 16...exd5 17.e5 ♘c4 18.♕e2 ♕c7 19.♘d4.



analysis diagram

A nice diagram position to understand the point behind a standard sacrifice like 16.d5. White has given a pawn in order to have an excellent knight on d4, which can easily become a very strong attacking piece by jumping to f5. White's d3 bishop is a strong attacking piece, which may easily form a battery with the queen and is perfectly placed on the open diagonal. White's e5 pawn has attacking power of its own (e5-e6) and can soon be joined by the f-pawn (f2-f4) rolling on the kingside.

Black's pieces are doomed to passivity: the b7 bishop is merely a pawn, the f5-square is weak due to the e6 pawn being moved to d5, his kingside pawn structure is vulnerable to attack in general, the knight on c4 is doing little and does not support the kingside defence, and finally, Black's counterplay is very limited as well. All this for the price of a single pawn is a good foundation for a positional pawn sacrifice and in general, not (too many) direct variations are needed to justify its soundness.

I know that I am being a little biased here – on the other hand, isn't life itself

biased? – when I say that in such positions I would almost per definition prefer White.

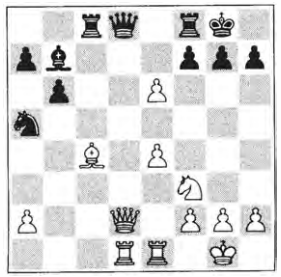
After 19...♖ae8 20.f4 b5 21.♔h1 White had good compensation for the pawn in Gulko-Yusupov, Tal Memorial, Riga 1995.

All White's pieces are well-placed, so there is no more time to waste.

15. d4-d5! e6xd5

This leads to a position which is better for White. Another main move is 15...♘a5 (as mentioned under 14...♘a5 15.♗d3 ♖c8 16.d5) and now:

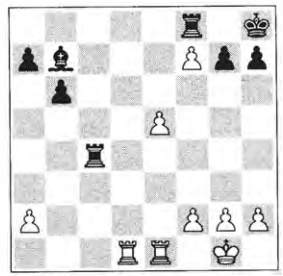
A) With rooks on e1 and c8, 16.dxe6 is, compared to the comment after 14.d5 ♘a5 15.dxe6!, much less dangerous for Black. Complications lead to a more or less forced drawn ending, see:



analysis diagram

A1) A bad mistake is 16...♘xc4? 17.exf7+ ♔h8 (or 17...♔xf7 18.♕f4+ ♕f6 19.♖d7+) 18.♕xd8 ♖cxd8 19.♖xd8 ♖xd8 20.e5 and White wins. Compared to the previously analysed position after 14.d5 ♘a5 15.dxe6 ♘c4, there is an extra tempo with the white rook on e1 instead of f1;

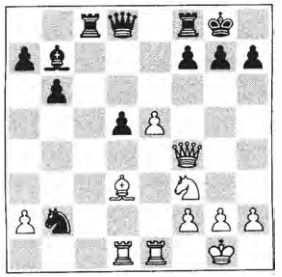
A2) 16...♕xd2! 17.exf7+ ♔h8 18.♘xd2 ♘xc4 19.♘xc4 ♖xc4 20.e5.



analysis diagram

The white pawns are rolling and Black is forced to quickly return the piece: 20...♗c8! 21.e6 ♗xe6 22.♖xe6 g6! (22...♖c7? is not accurate due to 23.♖e8 ♖xf7 24.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25.♖d7 ♖a8 26.♖b7 and White is better due to his active rook) 23.♖e7 ♖a4.

B) So, play now continues with 16.♗d3 exd5 17.e5 (again, a standard position for the d4-d5 pawn sacrifice has been reached) 17...♘c4 (it may seem that this situation is very different due to the fact that the white knight is still on e2 and compared to Gulko-Yusupov, there is no ♕e2, but:) 18.♕f4! (White trusts his attacking resources!) 18...♘b2

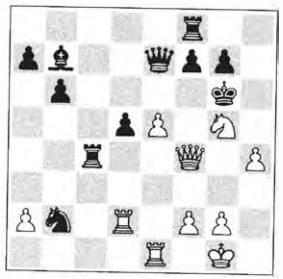


analysis diagram

19.♗xh7+!! (the idea behind 18.♕f4) 19...♔xh7 20.♘g5+ ♔g6 21.h4! (not only defending the knight, but also threatening a deadly 22.h5+!) and now:

B1) After 21...♘xd1?, White's idea becomes clear: 22.h5+! ♔xh5 (or 22...♔h6 23.♘e6+ ♔h7 24.♘xd8 ♖cxd8 25.♖xd1) 23.g4+! ♔g6 24.♕f5+ ♔h6 25.♕h7+ ♔xg5 26.♕h5+ ♔f4 27.♕f5 mate;

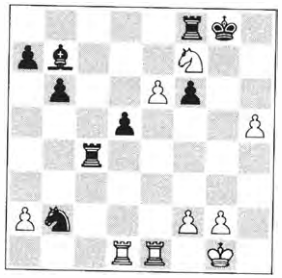
B2) 34 years (!) after the original 19.♗xh7+!! sacrifice saw the light of day, another top-level game was played which continued 21...♕e7 22.♖d2 ♖c4 (if 22...♘c4, White continues the attack with 23.♖d3)



analysis diagram

23.♕g3 (White misses a nice forced win with 23.h5+! ♔h6 (if 23...♔xh5?, Black still gets mated by 24.g4+ ♔h6 25.♕h2+) 24.♘xf7+ ♔h7 25.♕f5+ ♔g8 26.e6 ♘a4 (otherwise White simply collects the knight) 27.h6! (threatening mate in one) 27...♖h4 28.♖d4! and Black is helpless. Note that in all of these lines, apart from defending a pawn on d5, the bishop on b7 is passive and totally out of play. This is one of the big strategic points behind the d4-d5 pawn sacrifice) 23...♔h6 24.♖xb2 and White went on to win in Dreev-Yusupov, Mainz 2003;

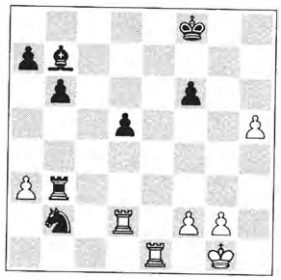
B3) 21...♖c4 22.h5+ ♔h6 (22...♔xh5?? 23.g4+ is the same old story) 23.♘xf7+ ♔h7 24.♕f5+ ♔g8 25.e6 ♕f6! (25...♕e7? loses to a motif from the above-mentioned line: 26.h6! ♖h4 27.♖d4!) 26.♕xf6 gxf6



analysis diagram

27.♖d2! (a forced draw is 27.♘d6 ♘xd1 28.e7 ♖c1 29.exf8♖+ ♔xf8 30.♘xb7 d4 31.♘d6 d3 32.♖e8+ ♔g7 33.♘f5+ ♔f7 34.♘d6+ ♔g7 35.♘f5+ ♔h7 36.♖e7+ ♔g8 37.♖e8+) and now:

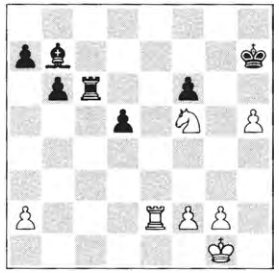
B31) 27...♖b4, defending the knight, looks logical, but loses after 28.a3!, throwing the b4 rook off-balance: 28...♖b3 29.e7 ♔xf7 30.exf8♕+ ♔xf8



analysis diagram

31.h6! ♔g8 (if 31...♗c6, then simply 32.♖e6; or 31...♘c4 32.h7 ♔g7 33.♖e7+ ♔h8 34.♖d4 and White wins) 32.♖e7 ♗c6 33.♖de2 ♘c4 34.♖g7+ ♔h8 35.♖ee7 and White delivers mate in a few moves;

B32) 27...♖c6 28.♖xb2 ♖e8 29.♘h6+! (transferring the knight to a better square) 29...♔h7 30.♘f5 ♖exe6 31.♖xe6 ♖xe6 32.♖c2 ♖c6 33.♖e2

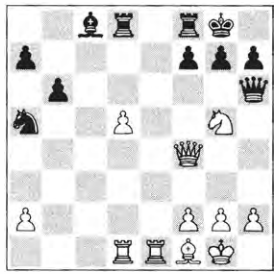


analysis diagram

33...♗c8? (this allows the white rook to enter the seventh rank, which proves decisive in this spectacular game. Better was 33...♖c7, though it could well be that Black is lost anyway after 34.♖e6) 34.♖e7+ ♔h8 35.♘h4! f5 36.♘g6+ ♔g8 37.♖xa7 and Black resigned in Polugaevsky-Tal, Moscow Soviet Championship 1969.

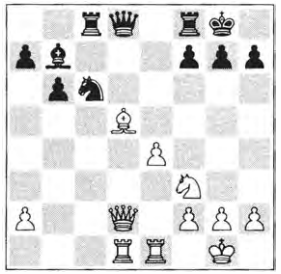
16. ♗c4xd5!

On d5 the bishop will be very dominant and Black will have to exchange it, creating a passed d-pawn for White after all. The immediate 16.exd5 gives Black a tempo with 16...♘a5 and is not that convincing: 17.♗f1 ♕d6 (17...♖c5 18.d6 ♗d5 19.♘g5! is dangerous for Black) 18.♘g5 ♖cd8 19.♕d3 ♕h6! 20.♕f5 ♗c8 21.♕f4



analysis diagram

21...♘b7! (cool and instructive defence. In such positions, the tables can turn easily, and all of a sudden White realizes that he is in serious trouble) 22.♖e7 (if 22.♗d3?!, 22...f6!) 22...f6 23.♘e6 ♕xf4 24.♘xf4 ♖f7 and Black had a good game in Khalifman-Ruban, Russian Championship, Elista 1995, since 25.d6? is not good due to 25...♔f8! and White loses his d-pawn.



16. ... ♘c6-a5

Very likely, Black's queen will have to be moved to e7 or c7, and Black might well have decided to do this at once:

A) 16...♕e7 17.e5! (note that compared to the line 14.d5 ed5 15.♗d5 ♕e7, White's rook is very useful on e1 here, like in most of the other lines, so it is clever for White to include 14.♖e1 ♖c8 after all!) 17...♘d8 18.♗xb7 ♘xb7 19.♘d4 g6 20.f4 and White is better with his pawn majority dangerously rolling towards the black king;

B) 16...♕c7, on the other hand, has some other deficiencies after 17.♕g5! h6 18.♕g4 ♖fd8 19.h3 (a useful move here) 19...♘e7 (19...♘b4? is bad due to the simple 20.♗xb7 ♕xb7 21.♘d4, and the white knight enters via f5), and now both 20.♗b3 and 20.♗xb7 ♕xb7 21.e5 look promising for White.

17. ♕d2-f4 ♕d8-c7

After 17...♕e7, White again transfers his knight to f5 with 18.♘d4.

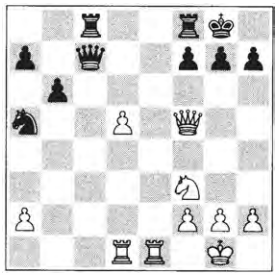
18. ♕f4-f5!

Keeping the pressure and forcing Black to eliminate the dominant bishop on d5.

18. ... ♗b7xd5

19. e4xd5

Now White has a fast passed pawn.



19. ... ♕c7-c2

Black wants to chase the white queen away from the b1-h7 diagonal in order to prevent the creation of dark-square weaknesses after White's ♘f3-g5.

Black does not have time for the knight transfer to d6, because 19...♘c4 loses to 20.♘g5 g6 21.♕h3 h5 22.♘e4 ♘d6 23.♘f6+ ♔g7 24.♕g3!.

A forced ending ensues after 19...♕d6 20.♘g5! ♕g6 21.♕xg6 hxg6 22.d6 ♘b7 23.d7 ♖cd8 24.♖e7 – this is likely lost for Black.

20. ♕f5-f4!

The ending after 20.♕xc2 ♖xc2 21.♖e7 is clearly better for White, but Spassky wants more.

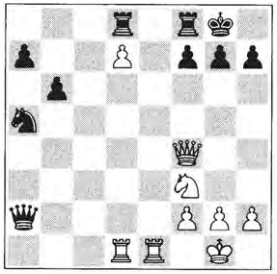
20. ... ♕c2xa2

Black has a point. His position is difficult anyway; now at least he has a pawn.

21. d5-d6! ♖c8-d8

22. d6-d7

It is obvious that White's strong pawn on d7 and his complete domination are worth more than the sacrificed pawn.



22. ... ♕a2-c4

23. ♕f4-f5 h7-h6

24. ♖d1-c1!

Preparing to enter on the seventh rank.

24. ... ♕c4-a6

25. ♖c1-c7 b6-b5

26. ♘f3-d4

26.♖e8 should also win (if 26...♕d6, 27.♖c8 ♕d1+ 28.♘e1), but it is understandable that White wants to keep one rook on the first rank.

26. ... ♕a6-b6

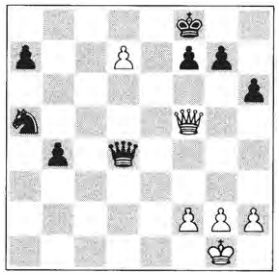
26...♕d6 is perhaps better than the text, but does not save Black after 27.♘xb5 ♕d2 28.♖b1 a6 29.♘c3 ♘b3 30.♖d1.

27. ♖c7-c8!

Black's fate is sealed.

27. ... ♘a5-b7

A nice line is 27...b4 28.♖e8! ♕xd4 29.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30.♖xf8+ ♔xf8



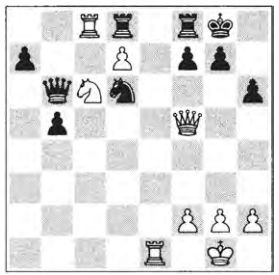
analysis diagram

31.♕c5+! ♕xc5 32.d8♕ mate.

27...g6 loses to 28.♖xd8 gxf5 29.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 30.♖e8+.

Or 27...♕xd4 28.♖xd8 ♖xd8 29.♖e8++–.

28. ♘d4-c6! ♘b7-d6



29. ♘c6xd8!

Nice execution until the very end.

29. ... ♘d6xf5

30. ♘d8-c6

Black resigned.

QI 7.4 (E12) **GAME 42**

Garry Kasparov
Miguel Najdorf
Bugojno 1982 (3)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♘g1-f3 b7-b6

4. a2-a3

This variation was brought on the big scene by the 10th World Champion Tigran Petrosian, who regularly employed it since 1958, and it was named after him. Nowadays it is one of the main lines of the Queen's Indian. Most of the time, the middlegame arising from this variation features a typical structure with a pawn majority in the centre.

The young Kasparov picked up this dynamic line, studied its ins and outs and scored many decisive victories with it, taking advantage of his excellent feeling for White's attacking potential, which is stored behind his central pawn majority.

The positional idea behind 4.a3 is a rather simple, straightforward fight for the central squares d5 and e4. Concretely, the move prevents the ♗b4 pin.

4. ... ♗c8-b7

5. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5

6. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

Another main line is 6...exd5.

7. e2-e3

Another popular move is 7.♕c2; see Game 45 (Sokolov-Polgar) further on in this chapter.

7. ... ♗f8-e7

All the normal moves for Black in this position have been tried hundreds of times in grandmaster practice: 7...g6; 7...♘f6; 7...♘d7 (see Galliamova-Tiviakov, Game 43, further on in this chapter) and 7...♘xc3.

8. ♗f1-b5+

This check is an idea of Petrosian himself. The idea is to slightly disturb Black's development.

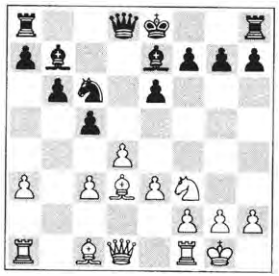
8. ... c7-c6

9. ♗b5-d3 ♘d5xc3

10. b2xc3 c6-c5

11. 0-0 ♘b8-c6

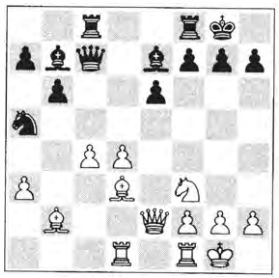
The main dilemma for Black here is where to put his knight. The other main line is, naturally, 11...♘d7.



12. e3-e4

Very logical; however, White can also decide to place his dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal and then (instead of e3-e4) push c3-c4, aiming for a position with hanging pawns in the centre.

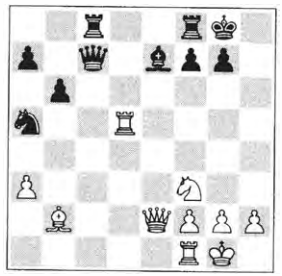
One of Kasparov's spectacular wins went as follows: 12.♗b2 ♖c8 13.♕e2 0-0 14.♖ad1 ♕c7 15.c4 cxd4 16.exd4 (a typical 'hanging pawns in the centre' position) 16...♘a5.



analysis diagram

Black hits White's c4 weakness.

17.d5! (with his pieces well developed, White goes for the central pawn thrust, as we have often seen in the previous chapter) 17...exd5 18.cxd5 ♗xd5 19.♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20.♖xd5 ♔g8.



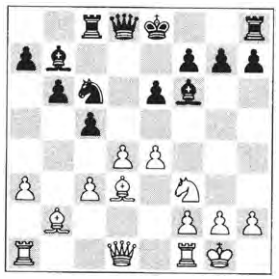
analysis diagram

White is harmoniously developed, but how to continue? A few pieces have already been exchanged and Black is about to consolidate.

21.♗xg7!! (this nice, thematic sacrifice is based on good calculation and intuitive tactical feeling) 21...♔xg7 22.♘e5! ♖fd8 23.♕g4+ ♔f8 24.♕f5! f6 25.♘d7+ ♖xd7 26.♖xd7 ♕c5 27.♕h7 and the black king remains under attack, Kasparov-Portisch, Niksic 1983.

12. ... 0-0

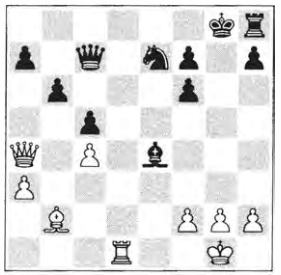
Black may also delay castling and first develop his rook: 12...♖c8 13.♗b2 (I assume that in the case of 13.♗e3 we would eventually get a transposition to the main game) 13...♗f6.



analysis diagram

With Black's king still on e8, Kasparov does not hesitate to sacrifice a pawn in order to open the centre: 14.d5! exd5 15.exd5 ♕xd5 16.♖e1 and now:

A) 16...♘e7? does not solve the problems of the black king stuck in the middle: 17.c4 ♕d6 (not 17...♕c6? because of the simple 18.♗e4) 18.♘e5! ♖d8 (if 18...♕c7, White has a strong attack after 19.♕h5; or 19.♕a4+ ♗c6 20.♕c2) 19.♕a4+ ♔f8 20.♖ad1 ♕c7 21.♗e4! ♖xd1 22.♖xd1 ♗xe4 23.♘d7+ ♔g8 24.♘xf6+ gxf6



analysis diagram

Now, 25.♕e8+ is not good; it will get White into trouble after 25...♔g7 26.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 27.♕xh8+ ♔g6;

But after 25.♗xf6!, Black is paralysed: 25...♘c6 (or 25...♕c8 26.♕d7 ♕xd7 27.♖xd7 ♘c6 28.♖c7 and White wins) 26.f3 ♗f5 27.♕xc6 and Black is mated.

B) So Black is forced to part with his right to castle: 16...♔f8 17.♕c2 ♘e5 (understandably, Black would like to exchange pieces) 18.♗e4 ♘xf3+ 19.♗xf3 ♕d7 20.♖ad1 ♕c7 21.♗xb7 ♕xb7

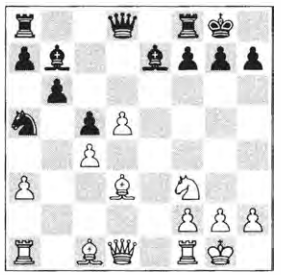
analysis diagram

22.♕a4?! (this move is probably a mistake, since now, the white bishop on b2 will be totally out of play for a while. It was better to exchange this passive bishop for Black's good one with 22.c4! and Black has terrible problems to connect his forces after 22...♗xb2 23.♕xb2 h5 24.♖d6! h4 25.♕d2 ♕b8 26.♖d7) 22...h5?! (better was 22...b5! 23.♕f4 h5 24.♖d6 ♖h6; 24...♕c7 25.♕f5) 23.♖d7 (Kasparov-Ivkov, Bugojno 1982) 23...♕c6 24.♕xa7 ♔g8 and White is better, although Black has good drawing chances based on White's weak queenside pawns.

13. ♗c1-e3

A logical question one may ask is: why not simply push the d4 pawn, seizing more space and sending the black knight to the edge of the board?

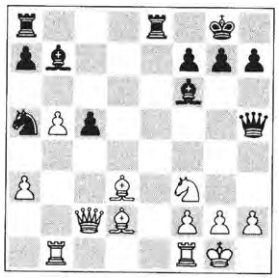
Well, things are not that simple, let's see: 13.d5 exd5 14.exd5 ♘a5 15.c4.



analysis diagram

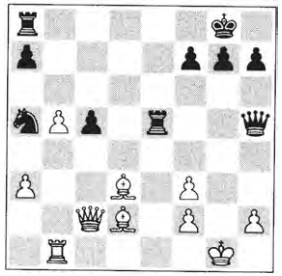
The black knight has indeed been pushed to the edge of the board and White seems to have strong central control, while Black's b7 bishop is also temporarily out of play. White's problem, however, is that his central pawns (c4 and d5) can easily been undermined with 15...b5! and after 16.cxb5:

A) Surprisingly enough, it is now wrong for Black to 'gain a tempo' and play 16...♗f6?! 17.♖b1 ♕xd5, since Black's a5 knight now indeed becomes stranded and becomes an easy target after 18.♕c2 ♖fe8 19.♗d2! and Black's otherwise well-coordinated, active pieces cannot compensate for the hopeless knight, for example: 19...♕h5



analysis diagram

20.♖fe1! (not 20.♗xa5? ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♗e5 22.f4 ♕g4+ 23.♔h1 ♕f3+ 24.♔g1 ♕g4+ and Black has at least a draw) 20...♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♗e5 (if 21...♘b7, White is clearly better after 22.♗e4 ♖e7 23.b6!) 22.♖xe5! ♖xe5



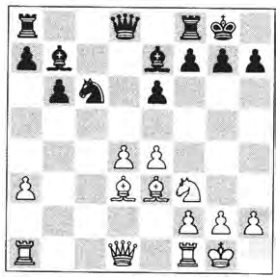
analysis diagram

23.♗e4! (23.♗xa5?? is a terrible mistake due to 23...♖g5+ 24.♔f1 ♖e8 and Black wins) 23...♖d8 24.♗xa5. The smoke has cleared – White is clearly better and went on to win in Arutinian-Melkumyan, Martuni 2007.

B) 16...♕xd5! 17.♕c2 ♘b3!. That's the difference. Black solves the problems of his stranded knight and he is at least equal.

13. ... c5xd4

14. c3xd4



A good moment to take stock and compare this position to the previous Semi-Tarrasch game. The pawn structure is the same, but the difference is that here the dark-squared bishops are still on the board. In my opinion, in general this should be favourable for White, since:

- Black has considerably less space to manoeuvre his pieces;
- Black queen sorties (to f6) are not possible;
- In the case of a central pawn blockade (after d4-d5 and e6-e5), it is, in general, positive for White to have the dark-squared bishops on the board. Should a black pawn appear on h6, White may get sacrificial motifs with ♗xh6 and, in general, in many lines White simply has one more piece for his kingside attack. The plus for Black – perhaps the only one – is the fact that the ...f7-f5 idea, to undermine White's pawn centre and take control of the d5-square, is much easier to execute with the dark-squared bishops still present.

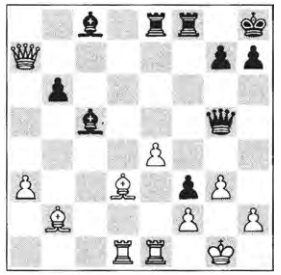
14. ... ♖a8-c8

If we consider this only black plus of having the dark-squared bishops on the board, then a rather interesting option – surprisingly enough, very little seen in practice – is:

A) 14...♔h8!? (the immediate 14...f5 allows 15.♕b3) 15.♕e2?! (White does not take Black's plan seriously, but he should have done so and considered moves like 15.♕b1) 15...f5.

Black correctly undermines the white centre and is about to take over control of the light squares (namely, d5). White does not have the possibility to solve the problem with a d4-d5 type sacrifice here – as we see further on in the chapter, in the game Sokolov-Howell – while after 16.exf5 exf5, Black has a very comfortable game.

White does not want to make any positional concessions and decides to temporarily sacrifice a pawn: 16.♖ad1 f4! 17.♗c1 ♘xd4 18.♘xd4 ♕xd4 19.♗b2 ♕c5 (Black had a strong intermezzo in 19...f3! 20.gxf3 ♕c5, when White would have had a difficult time of it with his damaged kingside pawn structure) 20.♕g4 ♕g5 (20...e5 21.♖c1 ♕d6 22.♖fd1) 21.♕xe6 ♖ae8 22.♕d7 f3! 23.g3 ♗c8 24.♕xa7 ♗c5 25.♖fe1



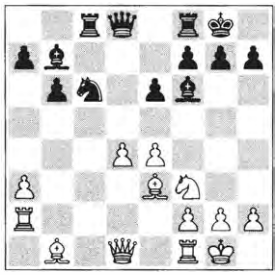
analysis diagram

25...♕h6! 26.♗f1? (White blunders in a very difficult position; on the other hand, 26.h4 weakens the g3-square and loses to 26...♕g6!) 26...♗xf2+ 27.♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 28.♔e3 ♕xb2 and Black won in Vaganian-Razuvaev, Yaroslavl 1982.

B) To use the presence of his dark-squared bishop in order to attack the white centre with 14...♗f6?! does not work nearly that well: 15.♗b1 ♖c8 16.♕d3 g6 17.♗a2! ♕d7 18.♖ad1 ♘a5 19.♗h6 ♖fe8 20.♘g5! and White had a promising kingside attack and soon won in Furman-Panno, Madrid 1973.

15. ♕d1-e2

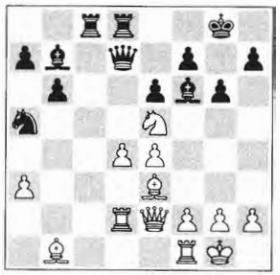
In one of his earlier games, Kasparov tried to develop his a1 rook, using a second-rank transfer to d2. This plan, though logical in itself, did not work well here: 15.♖a2!? ♗f6 16.♗b1



analysis diagram

16...g6! (in many lines, this protects the black king better against the kingside attack) 17.♕d3 (I guess that in the event of an immediate 17.♖d2, White did not like 17...♘a5) 17...♕d7 18.♖d2 ♖fd8 19.♕e2 ♘a5.

White's central pawns cannot move, while the ♘a5-c4 transfer is threatening. So, White's next move is more or less forced: 20.♘e5



analysis diagram

20...♗xe5! (Black is not afraid of ghosts. The white bishop on f6 alone cannot deliver mate, while his queen cannot be transferred to h6 to help) 21.dxe5 ♕c7 22.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23.♗g5 ♖d4 24.♕e3 (sacrificing a pawn, since after 24.♗f6 ♕c3! 25.♕g4 ♗a6 26.♕g5 ♕d2!, Black is better) 24...♕xe5 25.f4 ♕d6 26.♗e7 ♕d7 27.♗f6 ♖d1 28.♗c2. Respect can sometimes help a lot. Black was clearly better here, but still accepted a draw in Kasparov-Karolyi, Graz 1981.

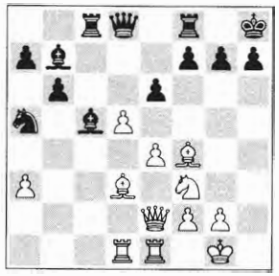
15. ... ♘c6-a5

15...♔h8!?, preparing ...f7-f5, is again positionally sound and was in a practical sense a very interesting alternative. After 16.♖fd1 ♘a5 17.a4, the positional idea 17...f5!, surprisingly not often used in practice, is very logical, engaging in a straightforward fight for domination of the central squares: 18.exf5 exf5 19.♗f4 ♘b3! 20.♖ab1 ♗xf3 21.♕xf3 ♘xd4 22.♕b7 and White was just in time with his draw offer in Browne-Smyslov, Los Polvorines 1980.

16. ♖f1-e1 ♕d8-d6

16...♔h8!? again came into consideration, and now:

A) 17.h4 is probably a dubious pawn sacrifice. Capablanca once said that a pawn is always worth sacrificing for a gain of three tempi. Well, here White is gaining only two: 17...♗xh4 18.♖ad1 ♗e7 19.d5 ♗c5 20.♗f4



analysis diagram

20...f6! 21.dxe6 ♕e7 (it is difficult for White to justify his pawn sacrifice) 22.♗b1 ♕xe6 23.♘h4? (White had definitely miscalculated. Somewhat better was 23.♘d4) 23...g5! 24.♗a2 ♕xe4 25.♕xe4 ♗xe4 26.♖xe4 gxf4 27.♖xf4 ♖cd8. Again, respect is a wonderful thing, since in this clearly better ending Black soon agreed to a draw in Kasparov-Groszpeter, Graz 1981. By the way, 27...♗xa3?? would have been a terrible blunder due to 28.♘g6+! hxg6 29.♖h4+ ♔g7 30.♖d7+ and wins.

B) An interesting option is 17.♖ad1!?, since after 17...♗xa3 18.♘g5 the white attack seems to compensate for the sacrificed pawn: 18...h6 19.♕h5 ♔g8.

analysis diagram

It seems that in this position, White has gotten closer to Capablanca's theoretical three tempi for the sacrificed pawn.

20.e5! (this thematic way of building the attack is dangerous here as well, but the thematic sacrifice 20.d5 exd5 21.e5 was definitely to be considered) 20...♕d5 (Black tries to make use of his only trumps, the open a8-h1 diagonal and the d5-square) 21.♘f3 (threatening 22.♗h6) 21...f5 (or 21...♕d7 22.♗xh6!) 22.♗xh6 gxh6 23.♕g6+ ♔h8 24.♕xh6+ ♔g8 25.♕g6+ ♔h8.

analysis diagram

Draw? 26.♗e4! No! 26...♕d7 (26...fxe4 loses to 27.♘g5 ♕d7 28.♖e3) 27.♘g5 ♖c3 (otherwise 28.♖e3) 28.♗xb7 ♘xb7 29.♘xe6 ♖f7 30.d5 and White's rolling pawns, combined with the exposed black king, will decide the battle;

C) The game develops in a highly complicated way after 17.a4 f5 (Black executes his plan) 18.exf5 exf5 19.♗f4 ♗b4! 20.♖ed1 ♘b3 21.♖ab1 ♘xd4 22.♘xd4 ♕xd4 23.♗e5 ♕d5 24.f4.

It is obvious that in this position, White has difficulty to prove his compensation.

analysis diagram

24...♗c5+?! (24...a5! was a possible improvement. Now White's strong e5 bishop, combined with Black's exposed queen, should offer White enough dynamic possibilities) 25.♔h1 ♖cd8?! (probably not feeling comfortable about his position, the former World Champion chooses a forced sequence of moves which lands him in a lost endgame) 26.♗xf5 ♕xg2+?! 27.♕xg2 ♖xd1+ 28.♖xd1 ♗xg2+ 29.♔xg2 ♖xf5 30.♖d7 (1-0, 46), Schmidt-Smyslov, Moscow 1980.

An interesting counterplay idea, also seen in similar lines, is 16...♖c3!? 17.a4 ♘b3 18.♖ad1 ♕a8 and Black's well-coordinated pieces exert pressure on White's pawn centre.

Here Kasparov opts for a thematic pawn sacrifice, which we have already explored in this chapter. The problem

with this sacrifice is that, even if it is sound from a positional/principled standpoint, there are always specifics of the position that are important to determine the correctness of the sacrifice. Those specifics are also present here:

17. d4-d5! e6xd5!

Correctly accepting the sacrifice. Declining with 17...e5 gives White an easy, risk-free advantage after 18.♖ab1 ♗a8 (otherwise 19.♗d2 comes anyway) 19.♗d2 ♘b7 20.a4 ♘c5 21.a5.

18. e4-e5!

White continues executing his thematic and principled plan.

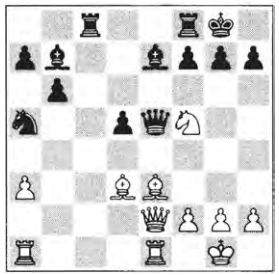
18. ... ♕d6-e6

19. ♘f3-d4

As already explained, one of the important aspects of this thematic pawn sacrifice is the beautiful outpost on d4 for the white knight. Conquering the bishop pair with 19.♘g5 does not give White enough compensation after 19...♗xg5 20.♗xg5 h6! (exact play is needed; 20...♘b3? is wrong due to 21.♗f6!) 21.♗f4 ♘b3! 22.♖ad1 ♘c5 and Black is better.

19. ... ♕e6xe5

20. ♘d4-f5



Another important aspect of the d4-d5 pawn sacrifice in these positions is the transfer of the white knight via d4 to the excellent attacking post on f5. Kasparov is playing a classical, book example attack. There are, however, specifics of the position and Black has a defence which can turn the tables.

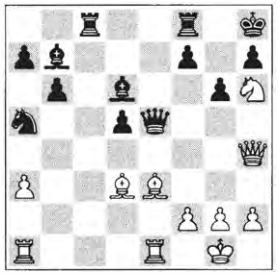
20. ... ♗e7-f6?!

It is obvious that the e7 bishop has to move. However, there was a tempo move: 20...♗d6!. I assume that Black did not like this move for the principled reason that his bishop would remain under attack by the f5 knight.

However, this small tempo gain gives Black a crucial break and it is difficult for White to prove that his initiative is indeed worth the sacrificed material.

Interestingly, 20...♗d6! is not mentioned at all by Kasparov in his comments (in *Chess Informant* and some other publications) and he praises the game move 20...♗f6 as the best defence, giving it an exclamation mark. It seems to me that after 20...♗d6! Black is better:

21.♕h5 (trying to keep matters complicated. Other moves simply do not offer enough compensation: 21.f4 ♕f6 22.♕h5 (or 22.♗d4 ♗c5) 22...h6; or 21.♘xd6 ♕xd6 22.♕g4 ♖fe8) 21...g6 22.♘h6+ ♔h8! (it is important to leave the g7-square vacant for the queen's retreat; 22...♔g7? 23.♕h4 is good for White) 23.♕h4 and now:

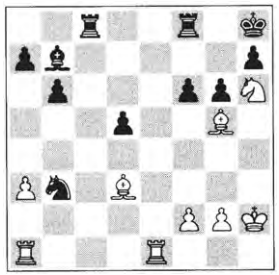


analysis diagram

A) Active defence with 23...♘b3 allows White to quickly develop an attack which is at least worth the sacrificed material:

A1) 24.♘g4?! is not good due to 24...♗e7! 25.♕h6 ♕h5;

A2) 24.♗g5 is definitely possible; the following line is entertaining: 24...♕xh2+ 25.♕xh2 ♗xh2+ 26.♔xh2 f6



analysis diagram

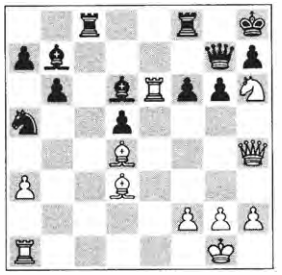
27.♗h4! (better than 27.♖ad1 fxg5 28.♖e7 ♘c5 29.♘f7+ ♖xf7 30.♖xf7 ♔g8 31.♖e7 ♖f8 32.f3 ♖f7 and with three pawns for an exchange, Black is better) 27...♘xa1 28.♖e7 ♗c6 29.♘f7+ and now:

A21) 29...♖xf7?! is a risky decision, since from the three missing pawns White will collect two back and with his bishop pair and Black's exposed king, he will have plenty of compensation after 30.♖xf7 g5 31.♗g3 ♘b3 (31...♔g8 32.♖xf6 ♗d7 (otherwise ♗d3-f5-e6 and ♗g3-e5) 33.♖d6) 32.♖xh7+ ♔g8 33.♖xa7 etc.;

A22) 29...♔g8 30.♘h6+ ♔h8 with a draw.

A3) 24.♖ab1! ♕c3 (only move) 25.♖ed1 f6 (again, this seems like the only move; 25...♗e5? fails to 26.♕e7!) 26.♗xg6. White is now only one pawn down and has strong compensation.

B) 23...♕g7! (this queen retreat may not be logical, but it is quite strong) 24.♗d4 f6 (Black is on the defensive, but he is two pawns up and White seems to be one tempo short with his attack) 25.♖e6 (if 25.♘g4?, 25...♘b3! wins)



analysis diagram

B1) 25...♘b3 is not that convincing after 26.♖xd6! g5? (this is a losing move. The white monster on d4 definitely had to be destroyed with 26...♘xd4!, though after 27.♕xd4 ♕xh6 28.♖d7! ♖c1+ 29.♗f1 ♖xa1 30.♕xa1 ♗c8 31.♖xa7, due to his active rook, White should be able to hold) 27.♕h3! (27.♕h5? allows 27...♘xd4) 27...♘xa1 (27...♘xd4? loses to 28.♖d7) 28.f4! ♖c1+ 29.♔f2 ♖d1 (trying to bring the bishop back into play does not help: 29...♗c8 30.♕e3 ♖d1 31.♖xf6! ♖xf6 32.♕e8+ and White wins) and now:

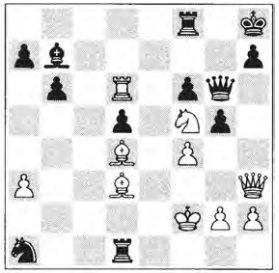
B11) 30.♖d7? ♖xd3;

B12) 30.♘f7+ ♔g8 31.♘xg5 ♖d2+ 32.♔e1 ♖xd3 33.♕xd3 ♕c7 34.♗xf6;

B13) 30.♘f5! and now:

B131) 30...♕g6.

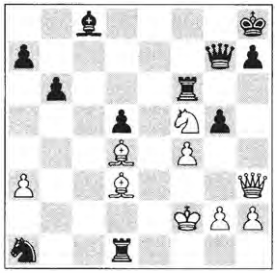
Now Black gets caught in a nice mating net.



analysis diagram

31.♖xf6! ♖xf6 32.♘e7 ♕xd3 (or 32...♕f7 33.♗xf6+) 33.♗xf6 mate;

B132) 30...♗c8 (pinning the white knight, the bishop now at least participates in the defence; however, White storms the barricades) 31.♖xf6! ♖xf6

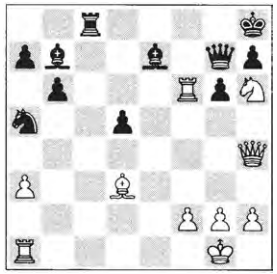


analysis diagram

32.♕h5!! (Black is helpless against White's double threat – 33.♕e8+ or 33.♘xg7) 32...♗xf5 (or 32...♗d7 33.♘xg7 ♖xf4+ 34.♔e3) 33.♕e8+ ♕g8 34.♗xf6 mate.

B133) 30...♖d2+ 31.♔e1 ♕c7 32.♔xd2 ♘b3+ 33.♔e2 ♘xd4+ (or 33...♖e8+ 34.♔f2 ♘xd4 35.♘xd4, winning) 34.♘xd4 and White wins because the rook on d6 is taboo due to the mate threat on h7;

B2) 25...♗c5! is the winning move: 26.♗xf6 (or 26.♗b2 d4) 26...♖xf6 27.♖xf6 ♗e7

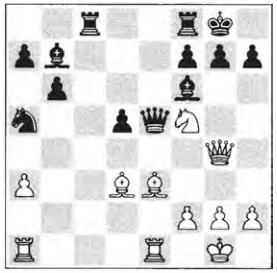


analysis diagram

And Black wins.

As we have seen, the position is very complicated, it is easy to go wrong and, after all, 20...♗f6 looks at first sight more logical than 20...♗d6. However, had Najdorf chosen for 20...♗d6, Kasparov would have had a hard time seeing all those 'promising lines' and finding out that none of them worked.

21. ♕e2-g4

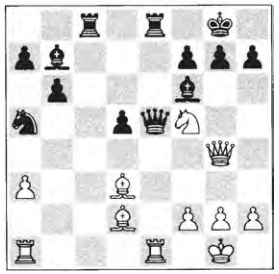


21. ... ♖c8-e8

Arguably the most logical defence. Black pins the white bishop along the e-file and vacates the c8-square for his b7 bishop, in order to control the f5-square. This sensible move, however, puts Black on the edge and it will require very exact defence to save the game. White's pieces are now very harmonious, with strong attacking potential, and White definitely has at least compensation for his sacrificed pawns.

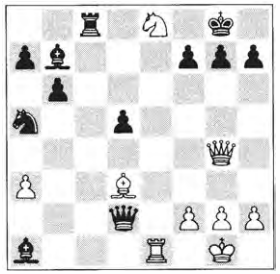
Let's see what happens if Black puts another rook on e8, which is much better than the game move, since Black will then have plenty of tactics related to the activity of both his rooks and White's weak back rank:

A) 21...♖fe8. Now, as in the game, energetic action is required from White: 22.♗d2! (an attempt to make some normal moves and play for compensation would not work, for example: 22.♖ad1 g6 23.♘h6+ ♔g7 24.♖e2 ♕c7)



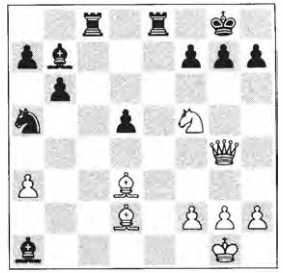
analysis diagram

22...♕xa1! (forced, since 22...♕b2 fails to the nice mating line 23.♘d6!! ♕xd2 (or 23...♖xe1+ 24.♖xe1 ♕xd2 25.♕xc8+!) 24.♘xe8 ♗xa1



analysis diagram

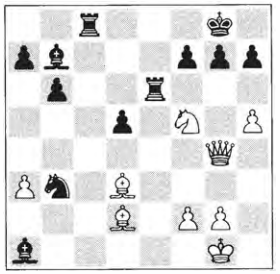
25.♘f6+! ♗xf6 26.♕xc8+ ♗xc8 27.♖e8 mate) 23.♖xa1 ♗xa1



analysis diagram

A1) Now the game idea 24.♘xg7? ♗xg7 25.♗h6 does not work for White after 25...♖c1+! 26.♗xc1 (26.♗f1? blunders into mate after 26...♖xf1+ 27.♔xf1 ♗a6+) 26...♖e1+ 27.♗f1 ♗a6 and Black wins;

A2) In his comments on the game Kasparov opines that White is clearly better after 24.h4. This is perhaps optimistic, but White definitely has strong attacking potential, for instance: 24...♖e6! 25.h5! (if 25.♘h6+, then 25...♔f8 26.♗b4+ ♖c5 and it is difficult to find a follow-up for White) 25...♘b3 (if 25...♘c4, 26.♘xg7! ♗xg7 27.♗c3)

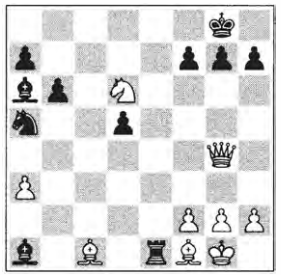


analysis diagram

A21) 26.♘xg7? is now a blunder, losing to 26...♗xg7 27.h6 ♖g6 28.♗xg6 hxg6 29.hxg7 ♘xd2 30.♕h4 ♖c1+ 31.♔h2 ♘f1+ 32.♔h3 ♔xg7;

A22) 26.♕d1! ♗c3 (or 26...♘xd2 27.♕xa1 f6 28.♕d1 ♘c4 29.♕a4) 27.♗xc3 ♖xc3 28.♗c2 and White's initiative continues. Note that the strong knight on f5 is a crucial attacking piece in all these lines;

A3) 24.♘d6 ♖c1+! (the passive defence 24...♖f8 loses after 25.♘xc8 ♗xc8 26.♕h4! h6 (or 26...g6 27.♗b4 ♖e8 28.♗b5) 27.♕e7! ♘c6 28.♗h7+) 25.♗xc1 (25.♗f1 does not make too much sense, since if he has nothing better, Black can still transpose with 25...♗a6 26.♗xc1 ♖e1) 25...♖e1+ 26.♗f1 ♗a6.



analysis diagram

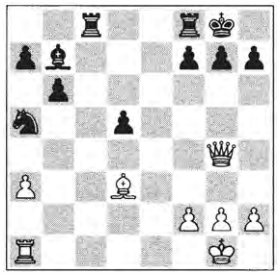
White seems to be in trouble, but his queen and knight are working very harmoniously and the black king is without defenders:

27.g3!! h6 (27...♖xf1+ 28.♔g2 ♖xc1 loses to 29.♕g5! ♗f1+ 30.♔g1) 28.♗d2! (it is important to force Black to take with his rook) 28...♖xf1+ 29.♔g2 ♘c4! (otherwise 30.♕d7) 30.♕e2! (the black rook appears to be very clumsy here) 30...♖b1 31.♕e8+ ♔h7 32.♕a4! ♘xd2! (or 32...♘xd6? 33.♕c2+; while if 32...♖b2?, the black rook is trapped after 33.♗c1 ♖a2 34.♕b3) 33.♕xa6 and Black is fighting for a draw;

B) Probably the best defence for Black was 21...♕c3!, when White can:

B1) Force a draw by perpetual with 22.♘h6+♔h8 23.♖ac1! (not 23.♗f5? ♘b3) 23...♕xd3 24.♘xf7+ ♔g8 25.♘h6+ ♔h8 26.♘f7+;

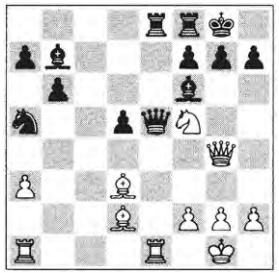
B2) Or choose 22.♘e7+ ♗xe7 (22...♔h8 23.♗xh7) 23.♗d4 ♕xd4 24.♕xd4 ♗f6 25.♕g4 ♗xa1 26.♖xa1.



analysis diagram

Here, Kasparov himself was optimistic about White's chances, but I am not that convinced.

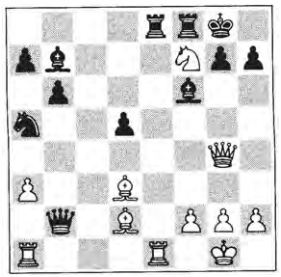
22. ♗e3-d2!



22. ... ♕e5xa1??

This huge blunder is a losing mistake. The queen retreat to c7 is also bad, losing after 22...♕c7? 23.♘h6+ ♔h8 24.♕f5 ♖e4 25.♖ac1! ♕b8 (or 25...♘c4? 26.♖xe4) 26.♗xe4 dxe4 27.♗b4!.

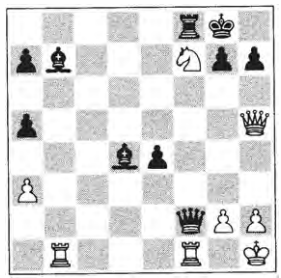
The only way to stay in the game was 22...♕b2!, which is now considerably better than after 21...♖fe8, since White does not have any visible mating tactics. This should, as far as I can see, still lead to a draw after 23.♘h6+! ♔h8 24.♘xf7+ ♔g8



analysis diagram

25.♗xa5! (the best winning attempt; if immediately 25.♕h5, then 25...♖e4) and now:

A) The active defence 25...♗d4!? looks good, but would not work after 26.♔h1!! bxa5 27.♕h5 ♖e4! (only move; 27...h6? loses to 28.♘xh6+ gxh6 29.♕g6+ ♗g7 30.♕h7+ ♔f7 31.♗g6+ ♔f6 32.♗h5!; while 27...g6? allows 28.♗xg6! hxg6 29.♕xg6+ ♗g7 30.♘g5) 28.♗xe4 dxe4 29.♖ab1 ♕xf2 30.♖f1

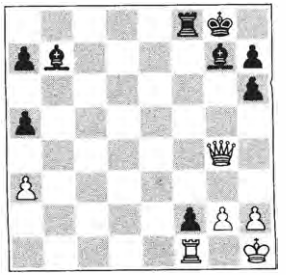


analysis diagram

30...e3! 31.♖xf2 exf2 32.♘h6+! and now:

A1) 32...♔h8? fails to 33.♘f5 ♗e4 34.♖c1! ♗xf5 35.♕xf5;

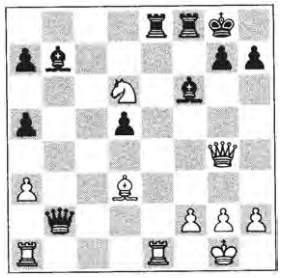
A2) 32...gxh6 33.♕g4+ ♗g7 34.♖f1.



analysis diagram

Due to the poor coordination of his pieces and his exposed king, Black will lose the pride of his position – the pawn on f2.

B) 25...bxa5! 26.♘d6! (26.♕h5 is a draw after 26...♖xe1+ 27.♖xe1 g6 28.♗xg6 hxg6 29.♕xg6+ ♗g7 30.♘h6+ ♔h8 31.♘f5 (the only winning attempt) 31...♗f6 32.♕h6+ ♔g8 33.♕g6+ ♔h8) and now:



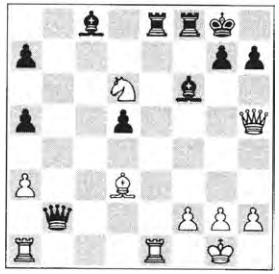
analysis diagram

B1) 26...♗d4? loses to 27.♘xe8 ♕xf2+ 28.♔h1 ♗xa1 29.♕e6+ ♔h8 30.♖xa1 d4 31.♖g1 and White is a piece up;

B2) Or 26...♖xe1+ 27.♖xe1 with the double threat of 28.♕e6+ and 28.♖b1;

B3) 26...♗c8!! (creating a mating threat and saving Black) and now:

B31) It is not too late to go wrong and walk into the mating net with the 'logical' 27.♕h5??

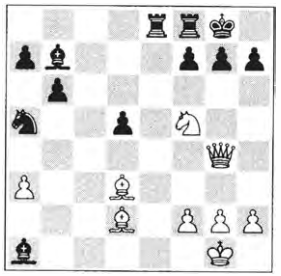


analysis diagram

27...♕xf2+!! 28.♔xf2 ♗d4+ 29.♔g3 ♗f2 mate;

B32) 27.♕f3! ♖xe1+ 28.♖xe1 g6 29.♕xd5+ ♔h8 and a draw is the likely outcome of this tactical mess, for example: 30.♘xc8 ♗d4 31.♖f1 ♖xf2 32.♔h1 ♖xf1+ 33.♗xf1 ♕f2 34.♕d8+ ♔g7 35.♕d7+ ♔h6 36.♕h3+ ♔g7 37.♕d7+.

23. ♖e1xa1 ♗f6xa1



24. ♘f5xg7!

Now it's over.

24. ... ♗a1xg7

25. ♗d2-h6

Black resigned.

In this relatively short game, Black succumbed under the pressure and his blunder abruptly ended the game. However, the middlegame position, typical for this structure, is a beautiful learning example, showing a multitude of dynamic possibilities and strategic ideas for both sides.

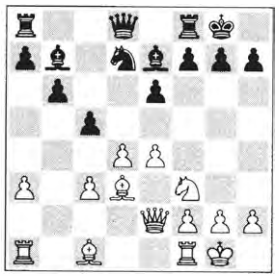
Perhaps I have given too many lines and the reader got lost in the trees of variations. But my advice is to analyse the comments to this game thoroughly, because it will improve the reader's understanding of these positions.

QI 4.8 (E12) **GAME 43**

Alisa Galliamova
Sergey Tiviakov

Elista President's Cup 1998 (1)

1.	**♘g1-f3**	**♘g8-f6**
2.	**c2-c4**	**b7-b6**
3.	**♘b1-c3**	**♗c8-b7**
4.	**d2-d4**	**e7-e6**
5.	**a2-a3**	**d7-d5**
6.	**c4xd5**	**♘f6xd5**
7.	**e2-e3**	**♘b8-d7**
8.	**♗f1-d3**	**♗f8-e7**
9.	**0-0**	**♘d5xc3**
10.	**b2xc3**	**c7-c5**
11.	**e3-e4**	**0-0**
12.	**♕d1-e2**	

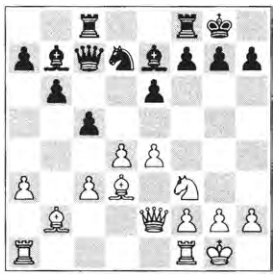


The pawn structure is the same as in our previous game Kasparov-Najdorf, with the difference that Black's knight is now developed on d7 instead of c6. The advantage of this is that it can be transferred to f6 or, in some lines (should ...e6-e5, d4-d5 materialize), to c5, the c-file remains open and the rook can sometimes enter via c3. Moreover, White's d4-d5 break does not come with tempo. The disadvantage is that White's d4 pawn is not attacked.

12. ... ♕d8-c7

Tiviakov does not have the best experiences with Galliamova in this line. In their mini-match in Elista, in the previous game where Galliamova played White, Tiviakov chose 12...♖c8 and let's see what happened:

13.♗b2 (in this line White sometimes also decides to develop his bishop to the h2-b8 diagonal with 13.♗f4. The move order with 12...♕c7 excludes this possibility) 13...♕c7



analysis diagram

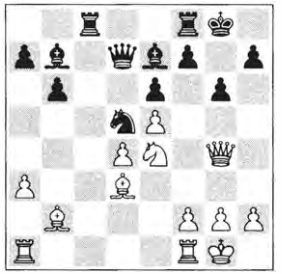
It is always difficult to decide where to put the white rooks in such positions. Should it be f1/d1, or e1/d1, or d1/a1, or maybe d1/c1? Former World Champion Anatoly Karpov, in his prime, had a fantastic natural feeling for these decisions. The course of the game would invariably prove that his rooks had been put on the best squares from the very beginning.

In this particular situation I believe that White's f1 rook should stay on f1 in order to support the pawn push f2-f4, while the only question, in my opinion, remains what is the best square for the other rook. However, you should take my opinion with a grain of salt, since two considerably better players than myself believed that the f1 rook should be placed on d1! Let's see a few examples:

14.♘d2. A natural move, preparing f2-f4.

A) One of my own games was rather instructive and continued 14...♘f6!?.

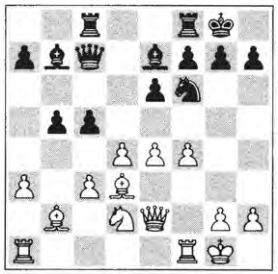
A1) Now, executing the commenced plan by trying to build an attack using the earlier discussed plans with e4-e5 would not work for White: 15.e5 ♘d5 16.♕e4 g6 17.♕g4 cxd4 18.cxd4 ♕d7 19.♘e4



analysis diagram

19...f5! (with the white bishop on b2, this move is a solution to the problem) 20.exf6 ♘xf6 21.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 and Black has an excellent game. The b7 bishop will move to d5, defending the e6 weakness, while the f6 bishop protects the king and is hitting White's weak d4 pawn;

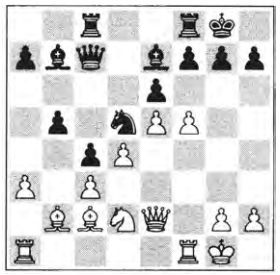
A2) 15.f4 b5! and now:



analysis diagram

A21) The b5 pawn is taboo, because of the simple 16.♗xb5? cxd4 17.cxd4 ♕c2!;

A22) The idea to start rolling the e- and f-pawns looks promising, but does not bring more than a draw after 16.e5 c4! (locking in White's b2 bishop) 17.♗c2 ♘d5 18.f5

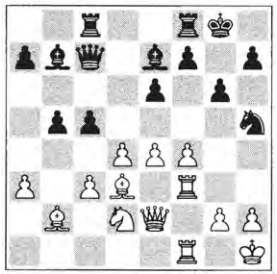


analysis diagram

18...f6! (often a standard reaction, and one to take note of!) 19.fxe6 (it is advisable for White to force a draw, since 19.exf6? is bad due to 19...♖xf6 20.fxe6 ♘f4; while after 19.♖ae1 fxe5 20.♕xe5 ♗d6! 21.♕xe6+ ♔h8 22.♘f3 ♘f6 all black pieces are working harmoniously and White will come under attack) 19...fxe5 20.♕h5 g6 21.♗xg6 hxg6 22.♕xg6+ ♔h8 23.♕h6+;

A23) On the other hand, a move like 16.g4!? definitely deserves attention and could be important from a theoretical point of view;

A24) 16.♖f3 g6! (a good prophylactic defence; if 16...♖fd8, White takes the initiative with 17.♖h3! h6 18.♖f1) 17.♔h1 ♘h5 18.♖af1.



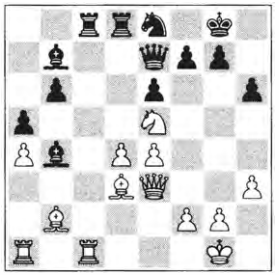
analysis diagram

And now Black fights for the central squares with a plan already shown on a few occasions; among others, in the comments to our previous game Kasparov-Najdorf: 18...c4! (first closing the diagonals that lead towards the black king) 19.♗c2 f5!. The white attack is stopped, while the b2 bishop has been reduced to a mere pawn. I had to struggle to ultimately save the draw from a worse position in Sokolov-Hracek, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

B) 14...♖fd8 is another common move.

B1) 15.♖fd1 is a strategy that I do not agree with, although it has been employed by no less players than Kasparov and Svidler. It looks to me that the rook is indeed perfectly placed on f1 and the correct way for White to proceed is 15.f4! with initiative on the kingside. On the other hand, there may be something in this position that I do not understand, so let's see how the game continues after the 'lesser' move:

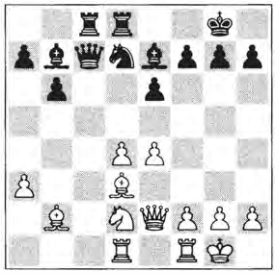
15...♘f6 (15...♘b8 was Karjakin's choice against Svidler in Foros 2008) 16.a4 cxd4 17.cxd4 ♗b4 18.♘f3 ♕e7 19.h3 h6 20.♕e3 a5 21.♖dc1 ♘e8 22.♘e5 ♘f6 23.♘f3 ♘e8 24.♘e5.



analysis diagram

White is slightly better, but it is difficult to improve his position: 24...♘f6 25.♘c4 ♖c6 26.♕g3 ♘h5 27.♕e3 ♘f6 28.♖c2 ♖dc8 29.♖ac1 ♕d8. White has somewhat more space, but Black is holding all the vital squares, Kasparov-Kramnik, Linares 2004.

B2) 15.♖ad1 cxd4 16.cxd4

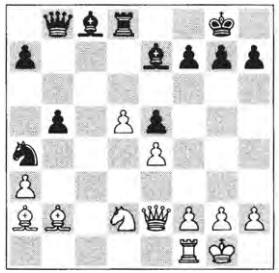


analysis diagram

16...e5!? (Black allows White to get a protected passed pawn in the centre, but on the other hand, he takes control of the dark squares, so his knight will get an excellent post on c5 – one of the points of the development of this knight to d7. This strategy often works for Black) 17.♖c1 ♕b8 18.♖xc8 ♗xc8! (if 18...♖xc8, 19.♘f3 (not 19.♗b5?! ♖c2! 20.♗a1 ♕c7) 19...exd4 (now, on 19...♗d6?! White has 20.♗b5) 20.♘xd4 ♘e5 21.♘f5 and the white knight has reached its dangerous attacking post on f5) 19.d5 (now, in case of 19.♘f3, Black's bishop is well placed, controlling the f5-square, and Black gets a good game after 19...exd4 20.♘xd4 ♘e5 21.♗b5 ♗c5) 19...♘c5 20.♗c4 b5!.

Seizing the initiative on the queenside. It should be noted that as a consequence of the ...e6-e5, d4-d5 transaction, the newly created pawn structure in the centre makes it more difficult for White to attack Black's kingside, since both white bishops are locked in at the moment. White's main idea is to increase the pressure on Black's centre by playing f2-f4, hoping that Black will have to take ...e5xf4, after which White will get strong mobile pawns in the centre (d5, e4) and his bishop pair will start working again.

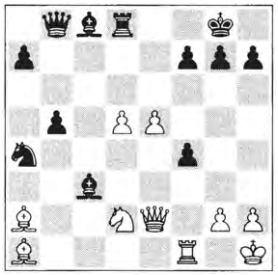
21.♗a2 ♘a4



analysis diagram

22.♗a1! (correctly sacrificing a pawn) 22...♗xa3 23.f4! (White is executing his main strategic idea) and now:

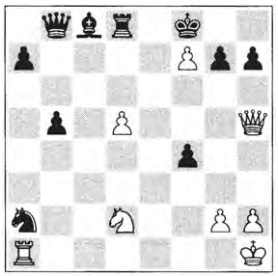
B21) A defence that would demand from White to show the best of his attacking abilities is 23...exf4! and we have a very sharp tactical struggle ahead, for instance: 24.♔h1! (the immediate 24.e5? fails to 24...♕b6+ 25.♔h1 ♕e3) 24...♗b4! (preparing ...♗b4-c3, to cut off White's dark-squared bishop) 25.e5 ♗c3.



analysis diagram

With only one bishop working, it is considerably more difficult for White to make use of his strong, mobile central pawns: 26.e6! (26.d6? is an obvious mistake after 26...♗xa1 27.♖xa1 ♘c3 28.♕f3 ♘xa2 29.♖xa2 ♗e6) and now:

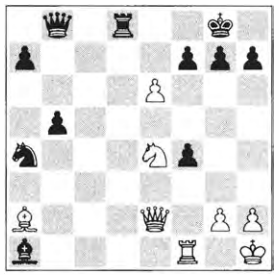
B211) If 26...♗xa1, White proceeds with 27.exf7+ ♔f8 28.♖xa1 (28.♕h5!? is an option) 28...♘c3 29.♕h5! ♘xa2



analysis diagram

30.♖e1! and Black is forced to return his extra piece with 30...♗g4! (30...♗d7? loses to 31.♕g5!) 31.♕xg4 – the black king is still exposed, his a2 knight is stranded, and White's initiative continues;

B212) 26...♗xe6! (this ingenious solution is probably Black's best defence) 27.♘e4! (it is important for White to keep his attacking potential alive. The logical 27.dxe6 would lose after 27...♖xd2 28.exf7+ ♔f8 29.♕e4 ♖xa2 30.♕xh7 ♖xa1! (not 30...♔xf7?, because Black loses his a2 rook after 31.♕h5+ g6 32.♕d5+) 31.♕g8+ ♔e7 32.♖xa1 ♕f8 33.♖d1 ♘c5!) 27...♗xa1 28.dxe6 and now:



analysis diagram

B2121) The attacking queen centralization with 28...♕e5, in general a good idea, would not help here: 29.exf7+ ♔h8 (or 29...♔f8

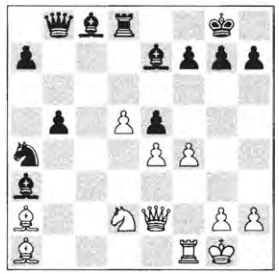
analysis diagram

30.♕e1! ♗d4 and now trouble comes from the other side: 31.♕h4! ♖b8

32.♘g5 and White wins) 30.♕d3! ♕e7 31.♖xf4 ♖f8 (if 31...♗f6, 32.♕f1 wins) 32.♕xb5. White has retrieved all his material, while his attack continues;

B2122) 28...♘c3! (exchanging a stranded knight for a well-placed one) 29.exf7+ ♔h8 30.♘xc3 ♗xc3 31.♖xf4. With his strong pawn on f7 White is better, but probably he does not have enough pieces to finish off. So, Black is likely to escape with a draw.

Back to the position after 22.♗a1 ♗xa3 23.f4.

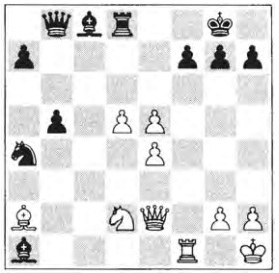


analysis diagram

B22) 23...♗c5+ (this check is the beginning of Black's troubles and it was definitely better to wait with it. Since now White achieves his strategic objectives, the position – even if it is very complicated – will be considerably easier to play from the white side) 24.♔h1 and now:

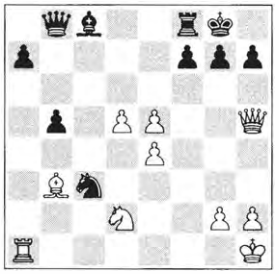
B221) 24...exf4? is not good, since after 25.e5, compared to the previously commented positions, White has both of his bishops working excellently behind his powerful, mobile centre pawns: 25...b4 (or 25...♗e3 26.e6) 26.e6! fxe6 (or 26...♕c7 27.exf7+ ♕xf7 28.d6! ♕xa2 29.♕e7) 27.dxe6 ♗e7 28.♕h5 ♖f8 29.♗b1 g6 30.♗xg6 and Black is mated;

B222) 24...♗d4 25.fxe5 ♗xa1



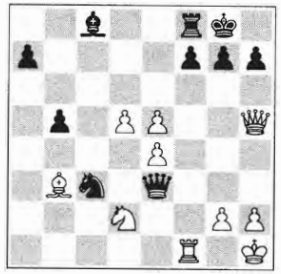
analysis diagram

26.♕h5! (an important zwischenzug, probably missed by Black) 26...♖f8 (26...g6 does not work due to 27.♕g5! ♖e8 28.d6! ♗e6 29.♗xe6 fxe6 (not 29...♖xe6?? 30.d7 and White queens) 30.♖xa1 and White's protected passed pawn on d6, in combination with Black's weak king, is worth much more than Black's two passers on the queenside) 27.♖xa1 ♘c3 28.♗b3 and now:



analysis diagram

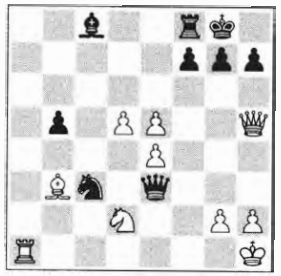
B2221) 28...♕b6? (this natural move is a losing mistake, because Black will always be 'one move too late' until the end of the game) 29.♖f1 ♕e3



analysis diagram

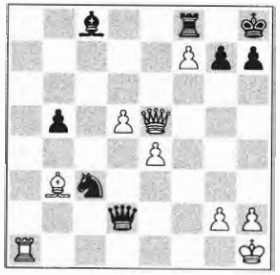
30.e6 (pushing the other pawn would also have won: 30.d6 ♗e6 (or 30...g6 31.♕h4! ♕xd2 32.♕f6 ♗f5 33.e6! and Black is soon mated) 31.♗xe6 fxe6 32.d7! and White wins) 30...g6 (or 30...♕xd2 31.e7) 31.♕f3 ♕xd2 (31...♕xf3 loses to 32.♖xf3 ♘e2 33.e7 ♖e8 34.d6) 32.♕f6! (even more brutal than the immediate 32.e7) 32...a5 33.e7 1-0, Galliamova-Tiviakov, Elista President's Cup (1.2) 1998;

B2222) The only way to stay in the game was 28...a5!, threatening ...a4, in order to remove White's bishop from the dangerous diagonal: 29.♖xa5. Black has sacrificed a pawn, which is rather irrelevant here, but he has won time, which will save his life. The following entertaining line ends in a perpetual check: 29...♕b6 30.♖a1 ♕e3



analysis diagram

31.e6! (not 31.♘f1? ♕d4! 32.♗c2 g6 with 33...♘xe4 to follow, and Black wins) 31...♕xd2 32.exf7+ ♔h8 (32...♖xf7?? 33.d6) 33.♕e5! (33.♕h4? loses to 33...g5! 34.♕h6 ♖xf7)



analysis diagram

33...♗h3! (only move) 34.gxh3 (34.♖g1 is a draw after 34...♘d1 35.♗xd1 ♗xg2+ 36.♖xg2 ♕xd1+ 37.♖g1 ♕f3+ 38.♖g2 ♕f1+) 34...♕d3 35.♕f5 ♘xe4

analysis diagram

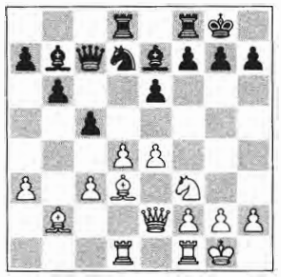
36.♖a8 ♕b1+ 37.♔g2 ♕b2+ 38.♔g1 ♕c1+ 39.♔g2 ♕b2+ with a draw.

13. ♗c1-b2 ♖a8-d8

Advancing the queenside pawns with 13...c4? 14.♗c2 b5 would be a strategic error, since it takes the pressure off White's centre and hence gives White a free hand to concentrate on the kingside attack, for example: 15.♖fb1

(also good is 15.♗c1 a5 16.♖b1 ♗a6 17.e5 b4 18.axb4 axb4 19.♗g5 ♘b6 20.♕e4 g6 21.♕h4 ♖a7 22.♗f6 ♗xf6 23.exf6 ♘d5 24.♗e4 with a huge advantage in Carlsen-Aronian, Mexico City 2007) 15...a5 16.♗c1 ♗a6 17.e5 ♖fb8 18.♘g5 ♘f8 19.♕h5 ♗xg5 20.♗xg5 ♗b7 21.h4 ♕c6 22.f3 ♕e8 23.♕g4 ♗d5 24.♗f6 ♘g6 25.h5 gxf6 26.exf6 with a big advantage for White in Sokolov-Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

14. ♖a1-d1



14. ... ♘d7-b8

Black transfers his knight to c6 in order to exert pressure on White's d4 pawn. This is a well-known strategy, seen in a number of games. On the other hand – to be honest, I have never understood this kind of strategy. It may well be that the black knight indeed belongs on c6, hitting White's d4 pawn, but then the question is: what was it doing on d7 in the first place? Wouldn't it have been better to develop it to c6 immediately, saving two tempi – since White's moves have been logical, and the placing of the knight on d7 has not forced White to make any unnatural decisions?

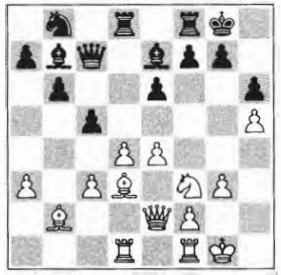
15. h2-h4

This move is always useful in these positions.

15. ... ♕c7-f4!?

Black wants to provoke the weakening g2-g3 in order to give more importance to his b7 bishop. It is questionable, however, whether this was indeed worth two tempi here.

16. g2-g3 ♕f4-c7
17. h4-h5 h7-h6



18. ♘f3-h2!

This type of knight transfer is not often seen in such positions. However, it corresponds to the needs of the position and makes sense here, the only drawback being that it temporarily removes the knight from the control of the central squares d4 and e5.

18. ... c5xd4
19. c3xd4 ♘b8-c6
20. ♗d3-b1 ♘c6-a5

The counterplay attempt with 20...e5 would not work well:

analysis diagram

A) The exchange sacrifice 21.d5 ♘d4! 22.♖xd4 looks interesting, but it is ques-

tionable whether it gives White enough compensation: 22...exd4 23.♗xd4 (Black is better after 23.♘f3 ♗c5 24.♘xd4 f5!) 23...♗xa3 24.♘g4 (if 24.♕g4, 24...f5! (White has enough compensation after 24...f6 25.e5! fxe5 26.♕g6) 25.exf5 ♕e7! 26.f6 ♖xf6) 24...♗c8;

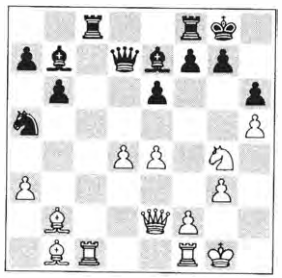
B) 21.♕c2! ♕d6 22.d5 ♘a5 23.♘g4 and White is better.

21. ♖d1-c1

This move has its advantages, but the rook was also well placed on d1. The immediate 21.♘g4 looks promising.

21. ... ♕c7-d7

22. ♘h2-g4 ♖d8-c8



23. d4-d5!

White decides that the time has come for a thematic central pawn sacrifice. It was also possible to calmly continue building the attack with 23.♕d3! f6 (if 23...♖xc1 24.♖xc1 f5, White is better after 25.♘e5 ♕e8 26.♕e2) 24.♘e3 (with the idea of a thematic follow-up with 25.d5 exd5 26.e5) and Black's defence is far from easy.

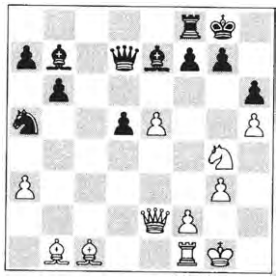
23. ... ♖c8xc1

24. ♗b2xc1

White is eyeing the h6 pawn. However, the alternative 24.♖xc1! looks stronger, since after 24...exd5 (ignoring White's pawn on d5 and trying to exchange more pieces with 24...♖c8 is probably a better defence) 25.e5 with 26.♕d3 to follow, White gets a devastating attack, which is not surprising, since all the white pieces are harmoniously participating in the attack, while Black's ♘a5 and ♗b7 are completely out of play.

24. ... e6xd5

25. e4-e5



25. ... ♕d7-a4!

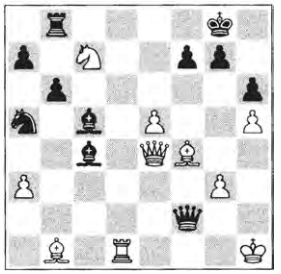
Good, active defence. Black is ready to meet 26.♕d3 with 26...♕e4.

26. ♖f1-e1

With 26.♕f3, in order to threaten 27.♕f5, White would have enough compensation, but Black also has his resources for an active defence. The following entertaining line illustrates some pros and cons of the position: 26...♗c8! (only move) 27.♘e3 ♗c5! 28.♘xd5 (28.♘f5 is an alternative) 28...♕d4 29.♗f4 ♗e6 30.♘c7 ♗c4 31.♖d1 ♕b2

analysis diagram

32.♕e4! ♕xf2+ 33.♔h1 ♖b8! (33...♖c8? may look more natural as it attacks the white knight, but leaves Black's rook exposed and loses after 34.♗xh6! ♕xg3 (on 34...gxh6 both 35.♕g4+ and 35.♕h7+ win) 35.♕f5! ♖b8 (or 35...♕h4+ 36.♔g2) 36.e6! fxe6 37.♕h7+ ♔f8 38.♗xg7+ ♕xg7 39.♖f1+! ♗xf1 40.♘xe6+) and now:



analysis diagram

A) 34.♗xh6? is not good because of 34...♕xg3! (34...gxh6? still loses to 35.♕h7+ ♔f8 36.♕xh6+ ♔e7 37.♕g5+ ♔f8 38.♖d8+ ♖xd8 39.♕xd8+ ♔g7 40.h6+ ♔xh6 41.♕h8+ ♔g5 42.♕h4 mate. With the white queen on e4, the text now threatens mate) 35.♕h7+ ♔f8 36.♕h8+ ♔e7 and now White's own king is under attack;

B) 34.e6! f5! 35.♕xf5 ♕f3+ 36.♔h2 ♕f2+ 37.♔h3 ♗f1+ 38.♖xf1 ♕xf1+ 39.♔g4 ♕d1+ 40.♔h3 ♕h1+ and White cannot escape the perpetual check.

26. ... ♕a4-c4

27. ♕e2-f3 ♗b7-c8

White correctly judges that all his pieces are already in perfect positions and a better moment to sacrifice is not likely to come. The time to strike is now!

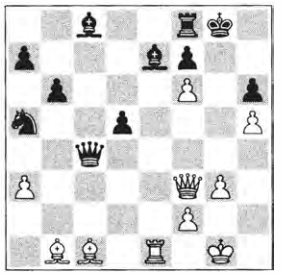
28. ♘g4-f6+!

If 28.♘e3, the rook position on e1 gives Black an important tempo: 28...♕c3 29.♕e2 ♕xe5 30.♗b2 ♕g5 31.♕d3 f5 32.♕xd5+ ♔h8.

28. ... g7xf6

29. e5xf6

White has correctly sacrificed her knight, but with the best defence it still does not promise more than a draw. However, the position is complicated and under such circumstances, the best defence mostly does not materialize in practice.



29. ... ♗e7-d8?

Black wants to keep the f6 pawn under attack, but this will turn out to be irrelevant.

The text is a losing blunder.

A) 29...♗g4?? runs into a forced mate: 30.fxe7 ♗xf3 31.exf8♕+ ♔xf8 32.♗xh6+ ♔g8 33.♖e8 mate;

B) It was important to stick to active defence with 29...♗c5!. With an active bishop on c5 Black would have counterplay, hitting the f2-square and having threats of his own. Also, last but not least, White's queen transfer via e3 is now impossible.

B1) 30.♗xh6 is a forced draw after 30...♗g4!

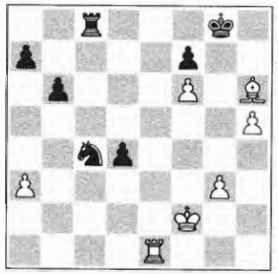
analysis diagram

31.♖e5! – only move:

B11) 31...♕c1+ 32.♗xc1 ♗xf3 is a draw after 33.♗h6 ♖d8. The winning attempt 33...♗e4? loses after 34.♗xe4 dxe4 35.♗xf8 ♔xf8 (35...♗xf8? 36.♖e8 ♘c4 37.h6) 36.♖xe4 ♗xa3 37.g4! and the white pawns cannot be stopped;

B12) 31...♗xf3 32.♖g5+ ♔h8 33.♗g7+ ♔g8 34.♗h6+ with perpetual check;

B2) 30.♗f5 is the best winning try: 30...♕d4! (the key defensive move. Black will take on f2 at the critical moment, returning his extra piece and exchanging the queens. 30...♗xf5 loses after 31.♕xf5 ♔h8 32.♗xh6 ♖g8 33.♗g7+ ♖xg7 34.fxg7+ ♔xg7 35.h6+! ♔xh6 36.♕f6+ ♔h7 37.♕xf7+ ♔h6 38.♖e6+ ♔g5 39.♕g6 mate) 31.♗xc8 (31.♗e3? blunders to 31...♕xf6; while 31.♗xh6?! is also not good due to 31...♕xf2+ 32.♕xf2 ♗xf2+ 33.♔xf2 ♗xf5 34.♖e5 ♖d8 35.♖xf5 ♘c4 and the black d-pawn will be fast) 31...♖xc8 32.♗xh6 ♘c4 (bringing the knight back into play and preventing 33.♖e5) 33.♕f5 (only move) 33...♕xf2+ 34.♕xf2 ♗xf2+ 35.♔xf2 d4.



analysis diagram

This sharp ending seems to be equal, for instance: 36.g4 ♖d8 (if 36...d3, 37.♖e4! d2? 38.♖d4) 37.g5 d3 38.g6! d2 39.♖e7 d1♕ 40.gxf7+ ♔h8 41.♖e8+ ♔h7 42.f8♕ ♕c2+ 43.♔g3 ♕c3+ (it's never too late to lose: 43...♖d3+?? 44.♗e3) 44.♔g2 ♕c2+ with a draw by perpetual check.

30. ♗c1xh6

This move is good enough for the win. However, considerably stronger was 30.♕e3! ♗xf6 31.♕xh6 and Black cannot prevent the mate.

30. ... ♕c4-g4

If 30...♕d4, 31.♗g7! and the march of White's h-pawn cannot be stopped: 31...♕d2 32.♖d1 ♕g5 33.h6 ♗xf6 34.♕xf6 ♕xf6 35.♗xf6; or 30...♗g4 31.♕e3 ♗xf6 32.♗xf8 ♔xf8 33.♕h6+ ♗g7 34.♕d6+ ♔g8 35.♖e8+.

31. ♕f3xd5! ♗d8xf6

Or 31...♗b7 32.♕d3.

32. ♗h6xf8 ♗c8-b7

The bishop on f8 cannot be taken because of 32...♔xf8 33.♕d6+ ♔g7 34.h6+!.

33. ♖e1-e8! ♕g4-a4
34. ♗b1-h7+ ♔g8xh7
35. ♕d5xf7+ 1-0

Being a 1.d2-d4 player, I have obviously had a considerable number of 'pawn majority in the centre' structures – and things have gone right many times, and wrong many times. Below I shall give two interesting examples where things went right.

GI 4.1 (D85) **GAME 44**
Ivan Sokolov
David Howell
London 2006 (5)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
2. c2-c4 g7-g6
3. ♘b1-c3 d7-d5
4. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5
5. e2-e4 ♘d5xc3
6. b2xc3 ♗f8-g7
7. ♕d1-a4+

The purpose of this check is to slightly disrupt Black's regular Grünfeld development. However, given the fact that White is also losing time with his early queen moves in the opening, the main idea behind the move is to avoid the direct, sharp lines of the Grünfeld.

7. ... ♕d8-d7

The other main move is 7...♘d7. Then the idea of 7.♕a4+ becomes clear. With a knight on d7, just like in our previous game Galliamova-Tiviakov, it would be more difficult for Black to exert pressure on White's d4 pawn.

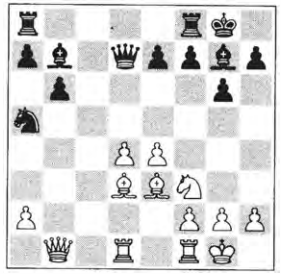
8. ♕a4-b3 0-0
9. ♘g1-f3 b7-b6

This is the natural Grünfeld place for Black's light-squared bishop.

10. ♗c1-e3 ♗c8-b7
11. ♗f1-d3 c7-c5
12. 0-0 ♘b8-c6
13. ♖a1-d1

After a logical sequence of developing moves on both sides, we get a position which, as regards pawn structure, resembles our Kasparov-Najdorf example (Game 42), with the important difference that Black's bishop is now fianchettoed on g7 instead of developed on e7. This has some pluses: White's d4 pawn is easier attacked and also the black king is better protected against different sorts of direct attacks. The minus is that, should White be on time with the pawn push h2-h4-h5 – and most of the time he is – Black's kingside may quickly become vulnerable to attack.

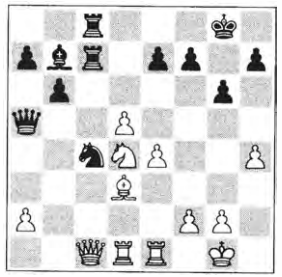
13. ... ♘c6-a5
14. ♕b3-b1 c5xd4
15. c3xd4



15. ... e7-e6

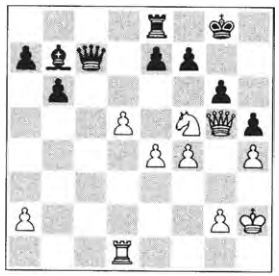
The main idea behind this move is to prevent d4-d5 for the time being. The most popular move is actually 15...♖ac8. White then indeed pushes 16.d5 and play usually continues 16...♘c4 17.♗d4 ♗xd4 18.♘xd4, and now:

A) If Black does not fix the centre and opts for imaginary activity with 18...♕a4?!, things can quickly go wrong, since the black king is left vulnerable and without defenders, while Black's activity on the queenside does not generate nearly adequate counterplay: 19.♖fe1 ♖c7 20.h4! (whenever possible, this is always a useful move for White in the Grünfeld Indian Defence) 20...♕a5?! 21.♕c1! (transferring the queen to the kingside) 21...♖fc8



analysis diagram

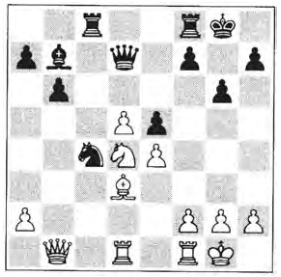
22.♗xc4! (the black knight is well placed on c4 and it is a good idea to exchange it) 22...♖xc4 23.♕e3 ♕c3 24.♖d3 ♕b2 25.♔h2 ♖c3 26.♖ed1 h5 27.♖xc3 ♕xc3 28.♕g5 ♕c7+ 29.f4 (Black is unable to develop any counterplay to counter White's kingside attack. Note the miserably passive position of Black's bishop on b7) 29...♖e8 30.♘f5.



analysis diagram

White had a strong attack and soon won in Milov-Krasenkow, Warsaw Ech 2005.

B) Two rounds later in the same tournament, Krasenkow refrained from 18...♕a4 and fixed the centre with 18...e5. This is a standard idea here.

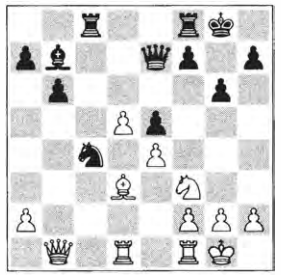


analysis diagram

As shown in similar positions in Galliamova-Tiviakov, this type of plan is positionally sound and slows White down. Here, an additional plus for

Black is that the knight on c4 has almost reached its perfect position: on d6. A potential problem for Black is that his king can become vulnerable.

I experimented with this line from the white side in 2006 and had an interesting game against Krasenkow. After 19.♘f3, I had expected that Krasenkow would follow his previous game and proceed with 19...♕e7. It may be interesting for the reader to know what I had prepared for that event.

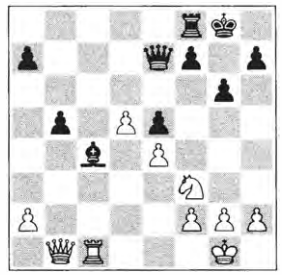


analysis diagram

The main idea of both 19...♕e7 and 19...f6 is to defend the e5 pawn, so that Black can place his knight on d6. In my opinion, if the black knight reaches the d6-square, it is worth more than White's bishop on d3. Also, I think that if White gets queen + knight versus queen + bishop in this pawn structure, he will have the somewhat better chances. So my idea was to proceed with 20.♗xc4! (the earlier Krasenkow game continued 20.♖c1 ♘d6 21.g3 f6 22.♘d2 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8 24.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 and a draw was soon agreed in Naer-Krasenkow, European Championship, Warsaw 2005) 20...♖xc4 21.♖c1 and now:

B1) White is better in the case of 21...♖b4 22.♖c7! ♕xc7 23.♕xb4;

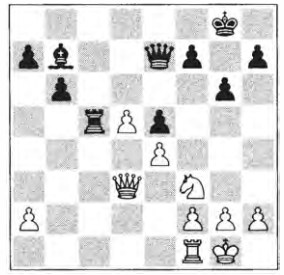
B2) Or 21...♗a6 22.♖xc4 ♗xc4 23.♖c1 b5



analysis diagram

24.♕a1! (an important tempo) 24...♖e8 25.♘d2 ♖c8 26.a4 a6 27.axb5 axb5 28.♕a6 ♕c5 29.h4 and Black will soon have problems defending his vulnerable king;

B3) 21...♖fc8 22.♖xc4 ♖xc4 23.♕d3 ♖c5



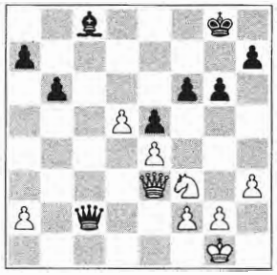
analysis diagram

24.♕a3! and now:

B31) If Black attempts to obtain counterplay with 24...f5, after a relatively forced sequence of moves White will be better in the endgame: 25.♕xa7! fxe4 26.♘g5! ♕xg5 27.♕xb7 e3 28.fxe3 ♕xe3+ 29.♔h1 ♕f4! 30.♖g1! ♕f8 31.♕xb6 (or 31.♕d7 ♕f7 32.♕d8+ ♕f8 33.♕xb6 ♖xd5, transposing) 31...♖xd5 32.a4.

White's passed a-pawn is strong, while Black's king remains exposed. Please note that plenty of rook endings are lost for Black;

B32) 24...♗c8 25.♖c1 ♖c2! 26.♕e3 ♕c7 27.♖xc2 ♕xc2 28.h3 f6.



analysis diagram

This is the kind of position I wanted to reach. White's d5 pawn is strong, well-defended and not easy to block; instead of a strong knight on d6, Black may have a lousy blocker in the bishop on d7. Furthermore, Black may have problems defending his e5 pawn should the f6 pawn be exchanged, and Black's king is very vulnerable; as will be shown in a number of lines, the king has no defenders at all, while White's queen + knight are a deadly attacking duo. My – probably correct – assessment was that this position should favour White.

My analysis continued 29.g4! (intending 30.g5 in order to create a black weakness on e5) and now:

B321) The easiest way to stop White's plan is 29...g5?, but this loses to 30.♘xe5! fxe5 31.♕xg5+ ♔f7 32.♕h5+ ♔f8 33.♕xe5 ♔f7 34.♕h8 ♕b1+ 35.♔h2;

B322) The ingenious defence 29...h6!? does not quite solve the problems, since White seems to be better after 30.♕xh6 ♕xe4 31.g5!;

B323) 29...♕xa2. If White is to have the initiative, Black may at least have a pawn to compensate for his troubles – such is the logic behind this pawn snatch. Now:

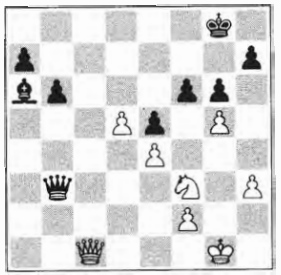
B3231) The immediate 30.g5 does not bring more than a draw after 30...♕a1+ (not 30...f5? 31.♕c1!) 31.♔g2 f5! (White achieves his aims after 31...fxg5 32.♕xg5) 32.d6 (or 32.exf5 ♗xf5 33.♘xe5 ♕d1! 34.♘d3 ♕xd3 35.♕e8+ with perpetual check) 32...♕d1 (White wins in the case of 32...♗e6? 33.♕d3) 33.♕c3

analysis diagram

33...♗b7! 34.♘xe5 (or 34.♕xe5 ♗xe4 35.♕e8+ ♔g7 36.♕e7+ draw) 34...♕xd6 (34...♗xe4+? loses to 35.f3) 35.♕c4+ ♔g7 36.♕f7+ ♔h8 37.♘c4 ♕c5 (White has some winning chances after 37...♗xe4+ 38.f3) 38.♕xb7 ♕xc4 39.exf5 gxf5 40.♕b8+ ♔g7 41.♕xa7+ (the ambitious 41.♕e5+ ♔g8 42.♕xf5 can only bring White trouble after 42...♕c6+ 43.♔g3 a5) 41...♔g6 42.♕xb6+ ♔xg5 with a dead draw.

B3232) 30.♕c1! (an important move) 30...♗a6 31.g5 ♕b3 (or 31...fxg5 32.♘xe5; while after 31...f5

32.♘xe5 fxe4 33.♘g4! the black king finds itself in a mating net)



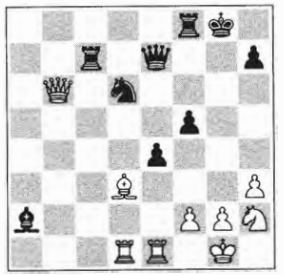
analysis diagram

Now the black king has no defenders at all and White wins nicely with 32.gxf6! ♕xf3 33.♕c6! and Black is mated.

One may well imagine that after spending quite some time to come up with the analyses shown above, I was quite disappointed to see a beautiful possibility, along with all my homework, being thrown out of the window when Krasenkow surprised me with 19...f6. So I was left on my own, looking for over-the-board solutions. I decided that taking on c4 would be less efficient now, but that, on the other hand, White might have a nice attacking manoeuvre in ♘h2-g4.

analysis diagram

20.h3 ♘d6 21.♘h2 ♕e7 (if 21...f5, then 22.♘f3 or 22.♖fe1 would remind Black that the e5 pawn can be a weakness now) 22.♕b2 ♖c7 23.♕a3! f5! (this standard break is obligatory) 24.exf5 gxf5 25.♕xa7 ♗xd5 26.♕xb6 ♗xa2 27.♖fe1 (strangely enough, this position resembles some kind of Sveshnikov Sicilian. White has a small advantage and Black should be careful) 27...e4



analysis diagram

28.♗b1! ♗xb1 29.♖xd6 (the knight should be preferred to the light-squared bishop here, so this was a good trade) 29...♖b7 30.♕d4 ♕g7 31.♘f1 ♕xd4 32.♖xd4 ♗d3 33.♘g3 ♖b5?! 34.♖c1 ♖e5?! 35.f4! ♖e6 36.♖d5 and Black was in serious trouble in Sokolov-Krasenkow, England tt 2005/06.

16. h2-h4

This standard plan is a good idea here as well.

16. ... f7-f5!?

This move is similar to plans shown in the comments on Game 42 – Kasparov-Najdorf (see Vaganian-Razuvaev) and has a sound strategic idea behind it. White has to find an energetic way to stop Black from executing his strategic idea, which is to remove White's e4 pawn and take control of the d5-square.

One of the earlier games in this position continued 16...♖ac8 17.h5 gxh5!? (an interesting solution to the problem;

Black is not afraid to weaken his kingside) 18.d5 ♘c4 19.♗d4 f6 20.♖c1 exd5 21.exd5 ♘d6 (it is not clear to me why Black refrained from taking on d5) 22.♕b3 ♖xc1 23.♖xc1 ♖c8 24.♖d1 with a complicated game in Milov-Rowson, France tt 2005.

17. ♗d3-b5!

This move prepares a standard pawn sacrifice, already seen in several earlier examples. If 17.h5 fxe4 18.♗xe4 ♗xe4 19.♕xe4 ♕d5, Black gets what he wants and has a good game.

17. ... ♕d7-d6
18. d4-d5! e6xd5

The pawn had to be taken. In the event of 18...fxe4, White gets a strong attack after 19.dxe6 ♕xe6 20.♘g5 ♕g4 21.♕b4 with 22.♖d7 to follow.
Also interesting is 21.♗d7 ♕xh4 22.♗e6+ ♔h8 23.g3 ♕h5 24.♔g2.

19. e4-e5!

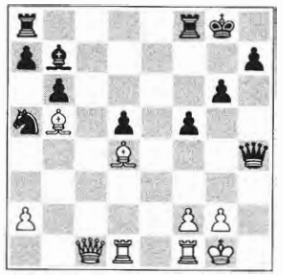
19. ... ♗g7xe5?

Taking a second pawn is a mistake. Black's dark squares are now very weak, while ♘a5 and ♗b7 are totally out of play for the moment.
Necessary was 19...♕e6! and after 20.♗f4 White has a number of positional trumps (passed e-pawn, a nice d4-square for his knight, attacking possibilities on the kingside, etc.) that ensure his compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but there is a complicated struggle ahead.

20. ♘f3xe5 ♕d6xe5
21. ♗e3-d4

This bishop is a monster and Black is falling under a deadly attack.

21. ... ♕e5-e4
22. ♕b1-c1 ♕e4xh4



23. ♕c1-c7?

When I played this move, I thought that Black's resignation would come in a few moves, completely missing Black's 24th move.
There was no need to hurry. The last white piece not yet in play is the f1 rook, and it would have been clever to proceed with 23.♖fe1!, after which I think that Black's position cannot be defended, for example: 23...♖f7 24.♕e3! ♕e4 25.♕h6 ♕g4 26.f3 ♕h5 27.♕f4 (threatening 28.♕e5) 27...♖af8 28.♖e6 with ♕e5 to follow, and Black's position collapses.

23. ... ♖f8-f7!
24. ♕c7-e5 ♖f7-e7!

Here I started to realize that things were not the way they seemed, but the next two checks had to be given anyway, so I played:

25. ♕e5-h8+ ♔g8-f7
26. ♕h8-g7+ ♔f7-e6

Here I thought for almost one hour trying to find something concrete, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that the black king was safe in the middle of the board.

27. ♖f1-e1+ ♔e6-d6
28. ♗d4-e5+ ♔d6-c5
29. ♗e5-d4+ ♔c5-d6

It is difficult to agree to a draw by perpetual check in a middlegame where your opponent's most active piece is his king!

30. ♖e1xe7! ♕h4xe7
31. ♕g7-h6 ♗b7-c6

Preparing the king's retreat.

32. ♗d4-c3!

This original bishop manoeuvre I had seen when I decided to play on with 30.♖e7.

32. ... ♔d6-c7
33. ♗c3-b4!

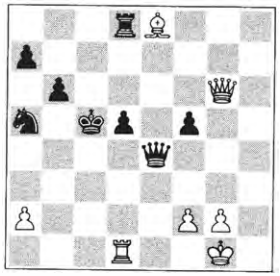
The point behind White's idea. This bishop is to be sacrificed in order to get to the black king. The sad news is that it does not promise more than a draw.

33. ... ♕e7-d7?

In time-trouble Black makes a losing mistake.
33...♕f7? should also lose after 34.♗a6! f4 35.♖d4!. However, Black had to keep cool and take the sacrificed piece: 33...♕xb4! 34.♕xh7+ and now:

A) 34...♔b8! 35.♕g8+ ♔b7 36.♕f7+ ♔b8 and White has nothing better than to give perpetual check;

B) Black can also courageously move his king to the centre with 34...♔d6!? 35.♕xg6+ ♔c5 36.♗xc6 ♖d8! (36...♖c8?? loses to 37.♕e6; or 36...♘xc6?? 37.♖c1+) 37.♗e8 (an alternative is 37.♖c1+!? ♘c4 38.♗b7) 37...♕e4!.



analysis diagram

The black king looks very strange on c5, but it may well be that White has nothing better than the forced drawing line 38.♖c1+ ♔b4 39.a3+ ♔xa3 40.♕g3+ ♘b3 41.♕c3 ♔a2! 42.♖c2+ ♔a3 43.♕b2+ ♔b4 44.♕c3+ ♔a3.

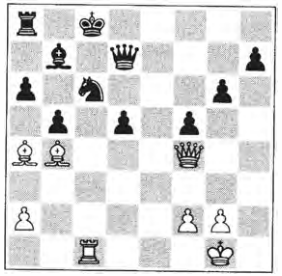
34. ♗b5-a6!

Now Black's pieces are clumsy and his position soon collapses.

34. ... ♗c6-b5

If 34...♘b7, 35.♕f4+ ♘d6 36.♖c1, and Black is subject to mortal pins.

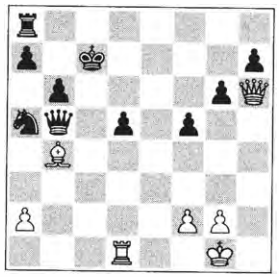
Black also collapses under the pins after 34...♗b7 35.♕f4+ ♔c8 36.♖c1+ ♘c6 37.♗b5! a6 38.♗a4 b5.



analysis diagram

The pin on the a4-e8 diagonal has been solved, but new and bigger problems are just around the corner: 39.♗a5! bxa4 40.♕e5! ♕f7 41.♕d6 and Black gets mated, either on d8 or on c7.

35. ♗a6xb5 ♕d7xb5

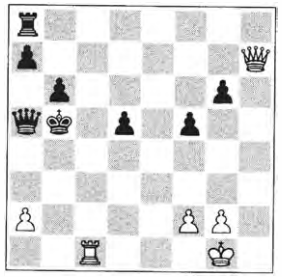


36. ♗b4xa5! ♕b5xa5

Exchanging all the minor pieces should, on general grounds, be a good idea for Black, but his king is much too exposed and will not get out of the mating net.

37. ♕h6xh7+ ♔c7-c6

38. ♖d1-c1+! ♔c6-b5



39. ♕h7-b7!

Cutting off the black king's escape route.

39. ... ♖a8-h8

40. ♖c1-b1+ ♔b5-c4

41. ♕b7-c6+ ♔c4-d3

42. ♖b1-d1+ ♔d3-e4

43. ♕c6-e6+ ♔e4-f4

44. ♖d1-d4+

Black resigned.

He will be mated in two: 44...♔g5 45.♕e7+ ♔h6 47.♖h4.

Throughout my career I have regularly employed the Petrosian Variation with white as my main weapon against the Queen's Indian. In the beginning of the year 2002 I spent some extra effort studying this line and the middlegame positions arising from it. Such efforts usually pay off and indeed, in the 2002-2005 period I scored well with this line and played a number of interesting games. In my comments to this game I shall also give a few other interesting examples.

QI 4.17 (E12) **GAME 45**

Ivan Sokolov

Judit Polgar

Hoogeveen 2003 (5)

1. d2-d4 ♘g8-f6

2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♘g1-f3 b7-b6

4. ♘b1-c3 ♗c8-b7

5. a2-a3 d7-d5

6. c4xd5 ♘f6xd5

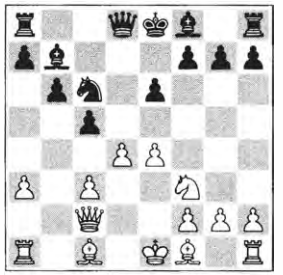
7. ♕d1-c2

This is the other main move in the topical Petrosian Variation. 7.e3 we have studied in Kasparov-Najdorf (Game 42) and in Galliamova-Tiviakov (Game 43). White's idea is simple – he wants to play e2-e4 in one move. However, later on the white queen mostly moves to e2 and normally we get either a transposition, or positions very similar to those after 7.e3. One of the reasons that 7.♕c2 is more frequently played than 7.e3 nowadays, is that white players have problems to find an advantage in the line 7.e3 g6. 7.♕c2, however, gives Black an extra possibility in the line with 8...c5 – see Sokolov-Kramnik in the comments to 8...♗e7.

7. ... ♘d5xc3

8. b2xc3 ♗f8-e7

The move order with 7.♕c2 allows Black, as mentioned in the above comments, to neglect the development of his kingside and attack the white centre immediately with 8...c5!? 9.e4 ♘c6.

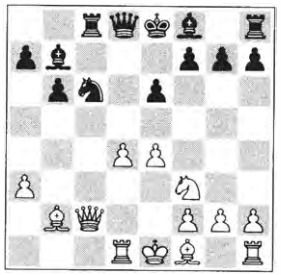


analysis diagram

This black set-up is not logical. His king is still stuck on e8. White has possibilities to open up the centre with d4-d5, play on the black king stuck in the middle of the board, and an unpleasant check or pin along the a4-d8 diagonal may come any moment.

That said, so far white players have surprisingly failed to find an advantage in this currently popular line. White can develop his dark-squared bishop to either e3 or b2.

A) The main variation is 10.♗b2 ♖c8 11.♖d1 cxd4 12.cxd4

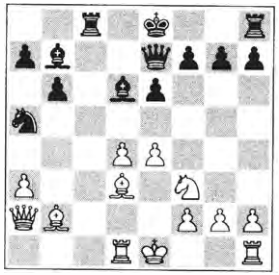


analysis diagram

12...♗d6!. This move by Joel Lautier has resurrected the whole line. For a number of years, the variation was considered not playable for Black on the grounds of the game Kasparov-Murey, Moscow Interzonal 1982, which continued 12...a6 (the idea of this move is to rule out the unpleasant check on a4. As we are about to see in Petursson-Lautier, it was not necessary to prevent this check) 13.♕d2! ♘a5 14.d5 exd5 15.exd5 ♗d6 (otherwise White's d-pawn continues its journey) 16.♗xg7 ♕e7+ 17.♗e2 ♖g8 18.♕h6 f5 19.♗f6 and White soon won.

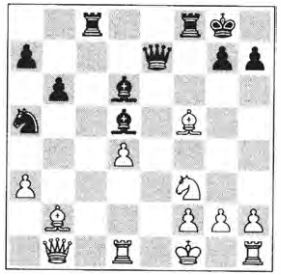
The point behind 12...♗d6! is that:

A1) In the case of 13.♕b1, the game Radjabov-Grischuk, Corsica 2003, beautifully illustrates Black's possibilities: 13...♕e7! 14.♕a2 ♘a5 15.♗d3



analysis diagram

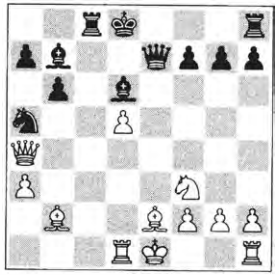
15...f5! (this familiar strategic plan, shown in a number of examples in this book already, works excellently here) 16.exf5 ♗d5! 17.♕b1 exf5+ 18.♔f1 0-0 19.♗xf5



analysis diagram

19...♖xf5! 20.♕xf5 ♗c4+ 21.♔g1 ♖f8 22.♕g5 (22.♕c2?? is a horrible blunder due to 22...♖xf3) 22...♕e2 23.♖b1 ♗f4 24.♕g4 and now only the fact that this was a rapid game can explain that, after playing a model game up to here, Grischuk missed the simple 24...♕c2, winning easily;

A2) 13.d5 exd5 14.exd5 ♕e7+! (this check is essential) 15.♗e2 ♘a5 16.♕a4+ ♔d8!.



analysis diagram

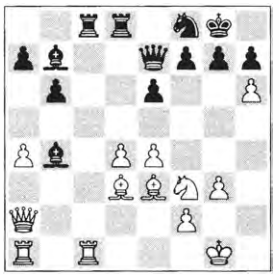
Surprisingly enough, Black is better here. His king is relatively safe on d8, while the white king cannot castle and

in general, White's pieces are poorly coordinated.

17.♘d4 (trying to castle. If White can manage that, the assessment of the position will change drastically. If 17.♗xg7 ♖g8 18.♕d4, then 18...♘b3! 19.♕b2 ♖xg7 20.♕xg7 ♖c2) 17...♖c4! 18.♕b5 ♖e8! 19.♔f1 ♖c5 20.♕d3 ♖xd5 and Black soon won in Petursson-Lautier, Marseille 1988.

B) 10.♗e3!? ♗e7.

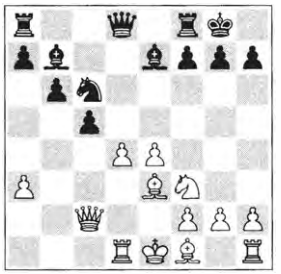
This allows a dangerous pawn break. A safer alternative is 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖c8 12.♕a2 ♗d6 13.♗d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♘e7 15.♖fc1 ♘g6 16.g3 ♕e7 17.a4 ♗b4 18.h4 ♖fd8 19.h5 ♘f8 20.h6.



analysis diagram

It seems that White is taking the initiative, but the unorthodox reply 20...gxh6! often solves Black's problems. See for a similar solution Milov-Rowson, in the comments to our previous game Sokolov-Howell. Players sometimes make the mistake to automatically discard such possibilities 'on general grounds'. After 21.♖xc8 ♖xc8 22.♖d1 h5 a complicated game ensued in Ponomariov-Anand, Sofia 2006.

11.d5! exd5 12.♖d1 d4 (forced. White is clearly better after 12...0-0 13.exd5 ♘a5 14.c4) 13.cxd4 0-0! (Black correctly first finishes development quickly. 13...cxd4?? was a losing mistake, due to 14.♗b5 ♕c7 15.♗f4 ♕c8 16.♘xd4 ♗c5 17.♘f5 0-0 18.♕c3 f6 19.♕g3 g6 20.♗c4+ ♔h8 21.♗h6)



analysis diagram

14.d5! (taking a pawn with 14.dxc5 does not promise anything after 14...♕c7 and Black gets his pawn back and has a good game) 14...♘d4 15.♕b2 ♖e8?.

This move is the main reason for Black's trouble in this game and it is, in a higher sense, a decisive mistake. Correct was 15...♘xf3+ 16.gxf3 ♕d6! and it is far from easy for White to move his centre, for example: 17.f4 (or 17.e5 ♕g6) 17...♕g6! and now, if 18.♗d3?, Black has 18...c4! 19.♗c2 f5! and White's centre collapses; 20.e5 ♕g2).

Now, after 15...♖e8?:

B1) 16.♘xd4? is bad due to 16...cxd4 17.♕xd4 (17.♗xd4 ♕xd5! 18.exd5?? ♗b4 is the kind of mate we often see in books for beginners) 17...♗c5 18.♕d3 ♕h4 19.♗xc5 bxc5 and White starts losing his central pawns;

B2) 16.♗xd4! cxd4 17.♗b5 ♗xa3! (Black is looking for salvation in tactics)

analysis diagram

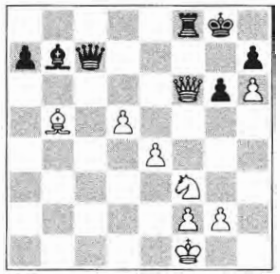
18.♕xd4! (taking the bishop is wrong, since Black is better after 18.♕xa3? ♖xe4+ 19.♔f1 ♕xd5) 18...♗c5 19.♕d3 ♗b4+ 20.♔f1.

White has a strong pawn centre and the h1 rook will be brought into play via the h-file, so the king being on f1 is not a handicap after all. Black's b7 bishop is out of play, while there is no time for Black to start moving his passed pawns on the queenside: 20...♖f8 (or 20...♖e7 21.♘d4) 21.♘d4 ♕c8 (White has a massive advantage in the case of 21...♗c5 22.♗c6 ♗xd4 23.♗xb7 ♖b8 24.♗c6 ♗e5 25.g3) 22.h4! ♗c5 23.h5 (it could well be that 23.♘f5! is more exact, since in the case of 23...g6 White has 24.♘h6+! ♔g7 25.h5) 23...♕g4 24.♘f3! ♖ad8 25.♖h4! ♕c8 26.♗c4.

Tired of his difficult, passive position, Kramnik now sacrifices a pawn, hoping to create some sort of counterplay. However, White simply has a massive advantage here and the black position cannot be saved: 26...b5 27.♗xb5 ♗b6 28.h6! g6 29.♕b3! ♕c5 30.♕b2 f6 31.♖f4! ♗c7 (or 31...♕d6 32.g3) 32.♖c1 ♕b6 33.♖xc7! ♕xc7 34.♖xf6 ♖xf6 35.♕xf6.

The white pawns are running and Black's king is in a terrible shape. Note that the bishop on b7 has been a passive bystander throughout the game.

35...♖f8 (or 35...♕c1+ 36.♘e1 ♕c7 37.d6! ♖xd6 38.♕e5 and Black is mated; 35...♖c8 loses to 36.d6 ♕c1+ 37.♘e1 ♕xh6 38.♗d7 ♕h1+ 39.♔e2 ♗a6+ 40.♔f3 ♕h5+ 41.♔g3)



analysis diagram

36.♕b2! ♖c8 37.d6! ♕c1+ 38.♕xc1 ♖xc1+ (Black has reached an ending, but at what price?) 39.♔e2 (the white pawns cannot be stopped) 39...♖c8 40.♘g5 a6 41.♗a4 1-0, Sokolov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

9. e2-e4 0-0

It is a bad idea for Black to attack the white centre immediately with 9...c5?, because 10.♗b5+! forces Black's bishop to c6, where it will be badly placed.

A) 10...♘c6 simply loses a pawn after 11.♕a4 ♖c8 12.♘e5 ♕c7 13.♗f4 (or 13.♕xa7) 13...a6! (the only move) 14.♗xa6 ♗xa6 15.♕xa6;

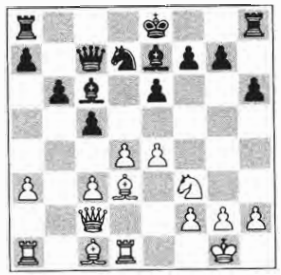
B) 10...♗c6 11.♗d3 ♘d7 12.0-0 h6 (if 12...0-0, 13.d5!) 13.♖d1 and now:

B1) 13...0-0 14.d5;

B2) In case of 13...cxd4 White has 14.♘xd4! (much better than 14.cxd4 ♖c8) 14...♕c7 15.♘xc6 ♕xc6 16.♕e2! ♖d8 17.♗b5 ♕c7 18.♕d3, and in order to solve the pin on the

a4-e8 diagonal, Black will have to give a pawn by playing a7-a6;

B3) 13...♕c7



analysis diagram

14.d5! (with the black king still on e8, White sacrifices a pawn in order to open up the position. This pawn sacrifice resembles the one in Kasparov-Ivkov given in the comments on Game 42 – Kasparov-Najdorf) 14...exd5 15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗b5 a6 (16...♗c6 would also not have solved the problem of the black king on e8; after 17.♗f4! ♕b7 18.♗xc6 ♕xc6 19.♖e1 it is obvious that Black's dreams about castling will remain wishful thinking: 19...♔f8 20.♖ad1 and White's initiative is worth much more than a pawn)

analysis diagram

17.♗f4!. Again this tempo move is crucial. Now:

B31) 17...♕b7? loses by force to 18.♗xd7+ ♕xd7 19.c4 ♕g4 20.♖xd5 ♕xf4 21.♖e1 ♖a7 22.♘e5! (the most accurate win) 22...♖c7 23.♘g6 fxg6 24.♕xg6+ ♕f7 25.♖d8+;

B32) 17...♕xf4 18.♗xd7+ ♔xd7 19.♖xd5+ (the black king remains exposed and the queen is very badly placed on f4) 19...♔c7 20.♖e1 ♗d6 (or 20...♗f6? 21.♖e4, trapping the queen, while 20...♖he8? loses a piece after 21.♖de5 ♕f6 22.♕e4) 21.♖f5! ♕c4 22.♖e4 ♕b5 23.♖xf7+ ♔b8 24.♖e6 ♖d8 25.c4 ♕c6 26.♘e5 ♕c8 27.♕b1 1-0, Kasparov-Gheorghiu, Moscow Interzonal 1982.

10. ♗f1-d3 c7-c5

11. 0-0 ♕d8-c8

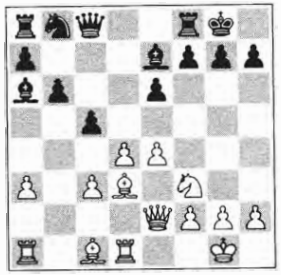
One of the main moves here. The white bishop on d3 is a dangerous attacking piece and Black wants to exchange it. Moreover, in that case the black queen will be transferred to the a6-f1 diagonal, controlling the light squares.

11...♕c8 is also a tempo move, since Black threatens 12...cxd4. White is forced to move his queen to e2.

Alternatives are 11...♕c7, 11...♘d7 or 11...♘c6.

12. ♕c2-e2 ♗b7-a6

13. ♖f1-d1



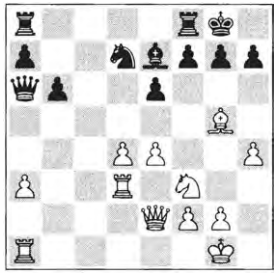
13. ... ♖f8-d8

Black first wants to place a rook on d8, hitting d4, and then decide where to develop his b8 knight. However, given the fact that the b8 knight will be developed to d7 anyhow, it would make more sense to first develop the b8 knight and then see what to do with the f8 rook. Main theory agrees and the game continuation is considered to be a sideline.

Most of the games continue with 13...♗xd3 14.♖xd3 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♘d7 and here, the main theoretical discussion concentrates on 16.e5, with which White employs a standard plan (seen in many of our examples) of surrendering the d5-square in order to gain more space on the kingside. Here the absence of light-squared bishops makes the defence easier for Black.

Back in 2003, preparing for the Hoogeveen tournament, I analysed the standard attacking move 16.h4, which keeps all the options regarding the central pawns open. Since Polgar played 13...♖d8, I was not able to test this plan (which would have been a novelty at the time) in Hoogeveen, but I got my chance a few months later in Reykjavik, against Stefansson:

16...♕a6 (placing the black queen on the f1-a6 diagonal and freeing the c8-square for a rook is the most logical continuation here. On a6, the queen is better placed than on c4, since now Black often plans ♖ac8 followed by ♖c3 or ♖c4. Moreover, the queen being on c4 could cost Black a tempo after 16...♕c4 17.h5 h6 18.♗f4 ♖ac8 19.♖ad1 ♘f6 20.♘e5, with some advantage for White in Sokolov-A.Kovacevic, Bosnia tt 2004) 17.♗g5

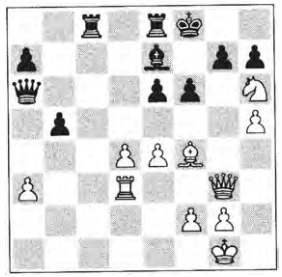


analysis diagram

A) Now 17...♗xg5! 18.hxg5 ♖ac8 was something Black should consider, in order to follow Black's plan in the game Sokolov-Bologan, shown in the next comment. This solves all Black's problems and is the main reason why I stopped employing this line with white. Compared to my game against Bologan, Black would be a tempo up – hence he would play ...♖f8-e8 at once. I was confident that White had the better chances here, because in my analysis I failed to notice Black's plan of ...♕a6-a4, ...♖c8-c4, ...♖f8-e8 and, with ♕a4 and ♖c4 indirectly pressurizing White's e4 pawn, Black threatens ...e6-e5. In the game mentioned later on it will become clear what I mean.

B) 17...♖fe8 18.♖ad1 ♖ac8 19.♕e3 (19.♗xe7 ♖xe7 20.e5 is definitely an alternative here. White gets his kingside attack) 19...f6 (like Polgar, Black prefers to keep the dark-squared bishops on) 20.♗f4 b5! (preparing counterplay with ...♘b6-c4) 21.h5 ♘b6 and now:

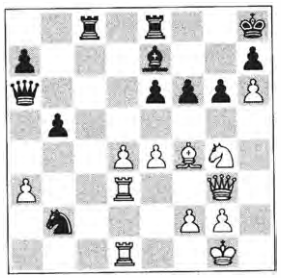
B1) The knight transfer to g4 (like in Game 43 Galliamova-Tiviakov) is interesting, but does not promise White more than a draw after 22.♘h2!? ♘c4 23.♕g3 ♘b2 24.♘g4 and now: 24...♔h8!? (24...♘xd3 25.♘h6+ ♔h8! (25...♔f8? 26.♖xd3



analysis diagram

with 27.♕xg7+! ♔xg7 28.♖g3+ to follow, and White wins) 26.♘f7+ ♔g8 27.♘h6+ with perpetual check) 25.h6.

B11) Here, 25...g6? would be a mistake that allows an immediate tactical solution:

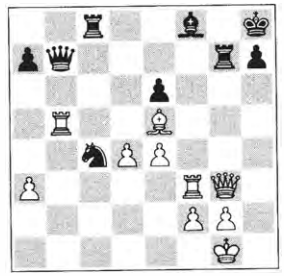


analysis diagram

26.♘xf6! ♗xf6 27.♗e5 ♖f8 28.♖f3 ♘xd1 29.♖xf6 ♖xf6 30.♕f4! ♖f8 31.♗xf6+ ♔g8 32.♕c7 ♖f7 33.♗e7! ♖f8 34.♗d6 ♖f7 35.♕d8+ and Black is mated.

B12) 25...♖g8 and now:

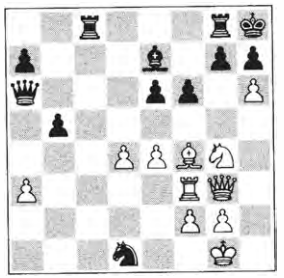
B121) If White is ambitious, he will have to opt for 26.♘e5!? fxe5 (instead, 26...♖cf8? loses nicely to 27.♘g6+! hxg6 28.♕xg6, with ♖h3 to follow) 27.hxg7+ ♖xg7 28.♗xe5 ♗f8 29.♖f3! ♕b7 30.♖b1! ♘c4 31.♖xb5



analysis diagram

31...♘xe5! 32.♖xb7 ♘xf3+ 33.♕xf3 ♖xb7 34.♕f6+ ♗g7 35.♕xe6 and in the end we get an unusual position on the board, which is difficult to assess. White's pawns are dangerous, but Black has enough resources. I would be surprised if White gets more than a draw here, while he may easily get in trouble;

B122) 26.♖f3 gxh6 (the greedy 26...♘xd1? loses to:



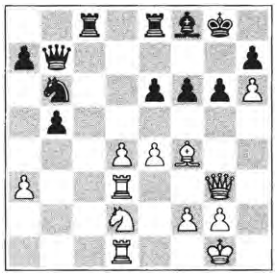
analysis diagram

27.♘e5! ♖cf8 28.♘g6+! hxg6 29.♕xg6 with ♖g3 or ♖h3 to follow) 27.♗e5! (27.♖b1? is wrong due to the simple 27...h5 28.♖xb2 ♖xg4) and now:

B1221) 27...♖cf8 28.♖xf6 ♖xf6 29.♕h4 ♖xg4 30.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 31.♕xf6+ ♔g8 32.♕d8+ ♔g7 (Black must be careful, since 32...♔f7? loses to 33.♖c1 ♘c4 34.♖c3) 33.♕e7+ with a draw;

B1222) 27...fxe5 28.♕xe5+ ♖g7 29.♘xh6 ♘xd1 30.♘f7+ ♔g8 31.♘h6+ and again a draw by perpetual check.

B2) 22.♘d2! ♗f8 23.♕g3 ♕b7 24.h6 (an alternative was 24.♖b1, moving one rook away from the ♘b2 fork, which will happen a few moves later) 24...g6 (24...g5?? is a terrible blunder due to 25.♗xg5)



analysis diagram

25.d5!? (this standard solution is somewhat premature here. However, over the board it was difficult to correctly assess the ensuing complications. An alternative was still 25.♖b1) 25...♘a4! (25...exd5?! 26.exd5 is good for White, since Black would then not have ...e6-e5 with tempo, closing the position at the critical moment) 26.d6! and now:

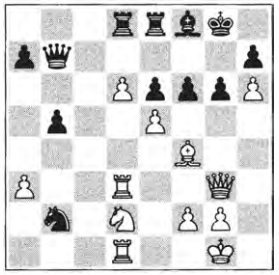
B21) In the case of 26...♘c5 White has an initiative after 27.e5 fxe5 28.♗g5!; not 28.♗xe5? due to 28...♘xd3 29.♕xd3 ♖c5.

B22) Correct is to immediately fork White's rooks with 26...♘b2!, and after 27.d7 ♘xd1 28.dxc8♕ ♕xc8! (28...♖xc8? loses to 29.♕g4!) 29.♕f3 e5! (White has compensation in the case of 29...♘b2 30.♖c3) and now:

B221) Black is simply a pawn up after 30.♗xe5 ♖xe5 (30...♘xf2 is a draw: 31.♕xf6 ♘xd3 32.♕h8+ ♔f7 33.♕f6+) 31.♕xd1 ♗xh6 32.♘f3 ♖e8;

B222) 30.♕xd1! exf4 31.♕b3+ ♕e6 32.♕xb5 ♗xh6 33.♖d7 and White will likely win back his pawn and make a draw – but there is not more in it for him.

B23) 26...♖cd8? (a decisive mistake) 27.e5! ♘b2



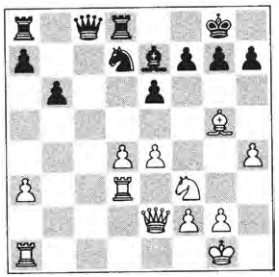
analysis diagram

28.♖d4! (when playing 26...♖cd8?, Black likely overlooked this. ♘d2-e4 is now a terrible threat) 28...♗xd6 (or indeed 28...♘xd1 29.♘e4) 29.exd6 ♘xd1 30.♘e4 ♖f8 31.♕f3! ♕f7 32.♖xd1 g5 33.♗e3 ♕g6 34.♗xa7 1-0, Sokolov-Stefansson, Iceland tt 2004.

14. h2-h4!

Given the fact that my preparation had originally been based on the plan with h2-h4 (albeit in a slightly different position), this was almost an automatic decision. Alternatives are 14.♗f4 or 14.♗b2.

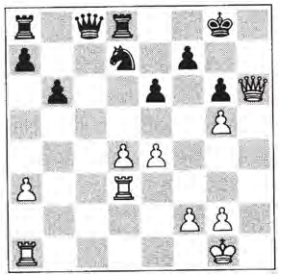
14. ... c5xd4
15. c3xd4 ♗a6xd3
16. ♖d1xd3 ♘b8-d7
17. ♗c1-g5



17. ... f7-f6?!

This move weakens Black's kingside pawn structure and will be the source of Black's problems. Better was 17...♗xg5 and now:

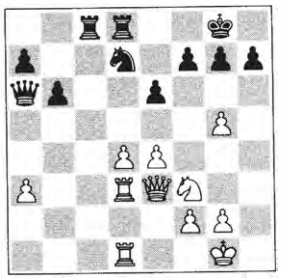
A) 18.♘xg5 h6 19.♕h5 looks promising, but in reality it only leads to a forced draw after 19...hxg5 20.hxg5 g6! (the best defence. White gets a winning attack after 20...♘e5? 21.♖h3 ♘g6 22.♕h7+ ♔f8 23.♖f3 ♔e7 24.♕xg7 ♖f8 25.d5!) 21.♕h6.



analysis diagram

It seems that ♖h3 and ♕h8 mate are inevitable, but Black has a nice defence: 21...♕c4! 22.♖ad1 and now 22...♕c2! 23.♖1d2 (23.♖h3?? is a terrible blunder after 23...♕xd1+ 24.♔h2 ♕xd4) 23...♕c1+ 24.♖d1 (24.♔h2? runs into 24...♘e5! 25.dxe5 ♖xd3 26.♖xd3 ♕f4+) 24...♕c2 with a draw;

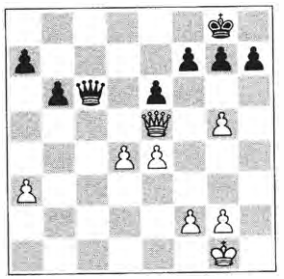
B) 18.hxg5 ♕a6 19.♖ad1 ♖ac8 20.♕e3.



analysis diagram

It seems that White has a small advantage and Black has very limited counterplay, but Black has an active plan: 20...♕a4! 21.♕f4 ♖e8! (with the idea ...♖c4 and ...e5!. Note that, as mentioned earlier, Black has wasted a tempo on ...♖d8 and could have had the same position with an extra tempo!) 22.♖c1 (if 22.g3, then, indeed, 22...♖c4! 23.♔g2 e5! and Black is better) 22...♖c6 23.♖dc3 ♖ec8 24.♖xc6 ♖xc6 and now:

B1) 25.♖xc6 ♕xc6 26.♘e5 ♘xe5 27.♕xe5

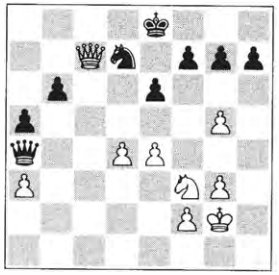


analysis diagram

27...h6! (now Black gets an easy draw) 28.g3 (or 28.gxh6 ♕c1+) 28...hxg5 29.♕b8+ ♔h7 30.♕xa7 ♕xe4 31.♕xb6 ♕e1+ 32.♔g2 ♕e4+ 33.♔h2 ♕c2 34.♔g2 draw, Sokolov-Bologan, Poikovsky 2004;

B2) Better was 25.g3 ♔f8! (bad for Black is 25...♖xc1+? 26.♕xc1 ♘f8,

when White wins with 27.♘e5! ♕xd4 28.♕c7 ♕a1+ 29.♔g2 ♕xa3 30.♕xf7+ ♔h8 31.♘c4 ♕c5 32.e5, followed by ♘d6) 26.♔g2! (threatening ♖h1 and forcing Black to take on c1, giving White control of the c-file) 26...♖xc1 27.♕xc1 a5 (in the absence of active moves it is often a good idea to start pushing pawns closer to their promotion squares) 28.♕c8+ ♔e7 29.♕c7 ♔e8



analysis diagram

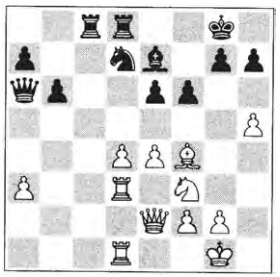
30.d5! ♕xe4 31.d6 ♕a8 32.♔g1! ♕d8 33.♘d4 ♘c5 34.♕c6+ ♔f8. White has obviously more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Whether he can win is another question.

18. ♗g5-f4 ♕c8-b7?

This will turn out to be a tempo loss. Better was the immediate 18...♕a6.

19. h4-h5 ♖a8-c8

20. ♖a1-d1 ♕b7-a6

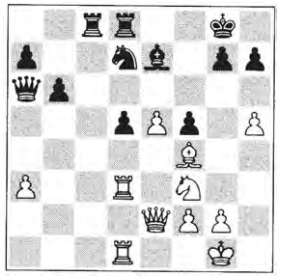


With all his pieces harmoniously developed, White has set the stage for direct operations.

21. e4-e5! f6-f5

22. d4-d5! e6xd5

White's d5 pawn had to be taken. The protected passed pawn on d6 and Black's irreparably weak e6 pawn would be worth much more than an exchange after 22...♘c5 23.d6.



23. ♘f3-d4!

The white knight goes to its natural post, aiming for its best attacking square – f5. White is planning to decide the game with a direct attack on the black king. He had safer options at his disposal. In general, it is difficult to define right and wrong in such situations; the decision is often a matter of style.

White had a safe advantage with 23.♕a2, but now a typical story where the better side plays it safe and ends up in a better, but still drawn ending, may easily materialize after 23...♕c4! (Black has to force the queen swap; 23...♘f8? loses to 24.♖xd5 ♖xd5 25.♕xd5+ ♔h8 26.♕f7 ♕a4 27.h6! ♕xd1+ 28.♔h2) 24.♕xc4 ♖xc4 25.♖xd5 ♖xf4 26.♖xd7 ♖xd7 27.♖xd7 ♗c5! (27...♗xa3? is a blunder, losing to 28.♘g5) 28.♖xa7 h6 and Black has good drawing chances.

23. ... ♖d8-f8!

After landing in a difficult position, Black finds the best defensive moves. 23...♘c5? would lose by force to 24.♘xf5 ♗f8 25.♕g4! ♘xd3 26.♘h6+ ♔h8 27.♘f7+ ♔g8 28.♕e6.

24. ♕e2-f3

The position is sharp and it is easy to blunder, for instance: 24.♘e6? ♘c5! and Black is better.

24. ... ♘d7-c5

25. h5-h6!

This move prepares the scene for a piece sacrifice. Naturally I could not calculate things till the end, but I did see a lot of promising lines and with Black's exposed king, his limited number of defenders and the black queen stranded on a6, the logic of the attack should be on the white side.

25. ... g7-g5!

Undoubtedly Black's best defence, since it forces White to find an exact execution.

In the case of 25...g6, White would have an easy continuation in 26.♕xd5+ ♔h8 27.♘e6 ♘xd3 28.♖xd3, with a clear and risk-free advantage.

26. ♗f4xg5!! ♗e7xg5

27. ♕f3-h5 ♗g5-f4

27...♗d8 loses to 28.♘xf5 ♔h8 29.♘d6! ♘xd3 (or 29...♖c7 30.♖f3) 30.♘f7+! ♔g8 31.♘xd8 ♖fxd8 (or 31...♖cxd8 32.♕g5+ ♔f7 33.♕f6+ ♔e8 34.♕e6 mate) 32.e6! and Black is soon mated.

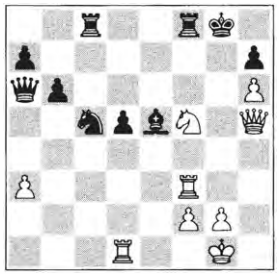
28. ♖d3-f3!

Precision is needed. 28.♘xf5 only leads to a draw after 28...♖xf5! 29.♕xf5 ♘xd3 30.♕e6+ ♔f8 31.♕f6+ ♔e8 32.♕e6+.

28. ... ♗f4xe5

29. ♘d4xf5

Finally the white knight reaches its best attacking square!



29. ... ♕a6-b7

Black finally brings his queen to the defence of the kingside, but the position can no longer be saved. Other moves also lose:

A) 29...♖ce8 loses to 30.♘d6 ♗xd6 31.♕g5+ ♔h8 32.♕g7 mate;

B) Or 29...♔h8 30.♘e7! ♗b2 (the only available square for the black bishop on the long diagonal) 31.♖b1! and now:

B1) 31...♖xf3 loses to 32.♖xb2 ♖cf8 33.gxf3 b5 (bringing the black queen back into play) 34.♕e5+ ♕f6 35.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 36.♖xb5 ♘e6 37.♖b8+ and the ending is easily won for White. The black bishop has run out of squares on the diagonal;

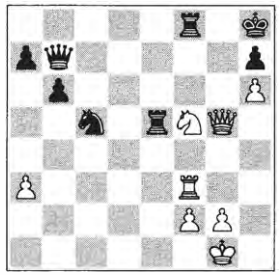
B2) 31...♗d4 loses to 32.♕xd5;

B3) 31...♕c4 32.♘xc8 ♖xc8 33.♕f7! ♖g8 (otherwise 34.♕f8+) 34.♖g3 ♖c8 35.♖g7 ♕c2 36.♖e1 (it's never too late for a terrible blunder, spoiling a beautiful game and resulting in endless, sleepless nights: 36.♖xb2?? ♕c1+ 37.♔h2 ♕xh6+ and Black wins) 36...♗e5 37.♖g5! and White wins.

30. ♖d1xd5! ♖c8-e8
31. ♕h5-g5+ ♔g8-h8
32. ♖d5xe5

Here I was spending most of my time checking whether my planned tactical idea worked. And it does work indeed. The aesthetic effect of my 33rd move also played a role for me in that I did not look for other solutions. Even better was 32.♘e7!! ♗b2 33.♖e5!, winning on the spot.

32. ... ♖e8xe5



33. ♘f5-e7!! ♖e5-e1+
34. ♔g1-h2 ♕b7-b8+
35. ♖f3-g3 ♖e1xe7

The only move that prevents mate, see 35...♘e6 36.♕g7+ ♘xg7 37.hxg7 mate; or 35...♕xg3+ 36.fxg3 ♘e6 37.♕d2! ♖e4 38.♕d3! ♖g4 39.♕e2, winning.

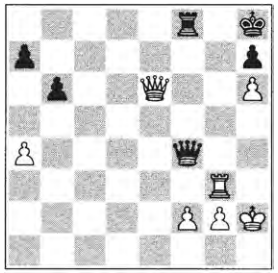
36. ♕g5xe7 ♘c5-e6

Black is forced to give her knight as well.

37. ♕e7xe6 ♕b8-f4

Black has prevented an immediate onslaught, but her problems are far from solved. White is a sound pawn up, and the black king is still under threat.

38. a3-a4



38. ... a7-a6?

This blunder in time pressure simply loses a pawn and concludes the game. 38...♕xf2?? would run into a mate after 39.♖g8+! ♖xg8 40.♕e5+; the only way to struggle on was with 38...♖f7.

39. ♕e6xb6 ♖f8-b8

Or 39...♖f6 40.♕b2! ♕xh6+ 41.♔g1, with 42.♖f3 to follow.

40. ♕b6-e3 ♕f4-h4+
41. ♖g3-h3 ♕h4-f6
42. ♕e3-c3 1-0

New In Chess Code System

White stands slightly better	±
Black stands slightly better	∓
White stands better	±
Black stands better	∓
White has a decisive advantage	+–
Black has a decisive advantage	–+
balanced position	=
unclear position	∞
compensation for the material	⩲
strong (sufficient)	>
weak (insufficient)	<
better is	≥
weaker is	≤
good move	!
excellent move	!!
bad move	?
blunder	??
interesting move	!?
dubious move	?!
only move	□
with the idea	△
attack	→
initiative	↑
lead in development	↑↑
counterplay	⇄
mate	X
correspondence	corr.

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